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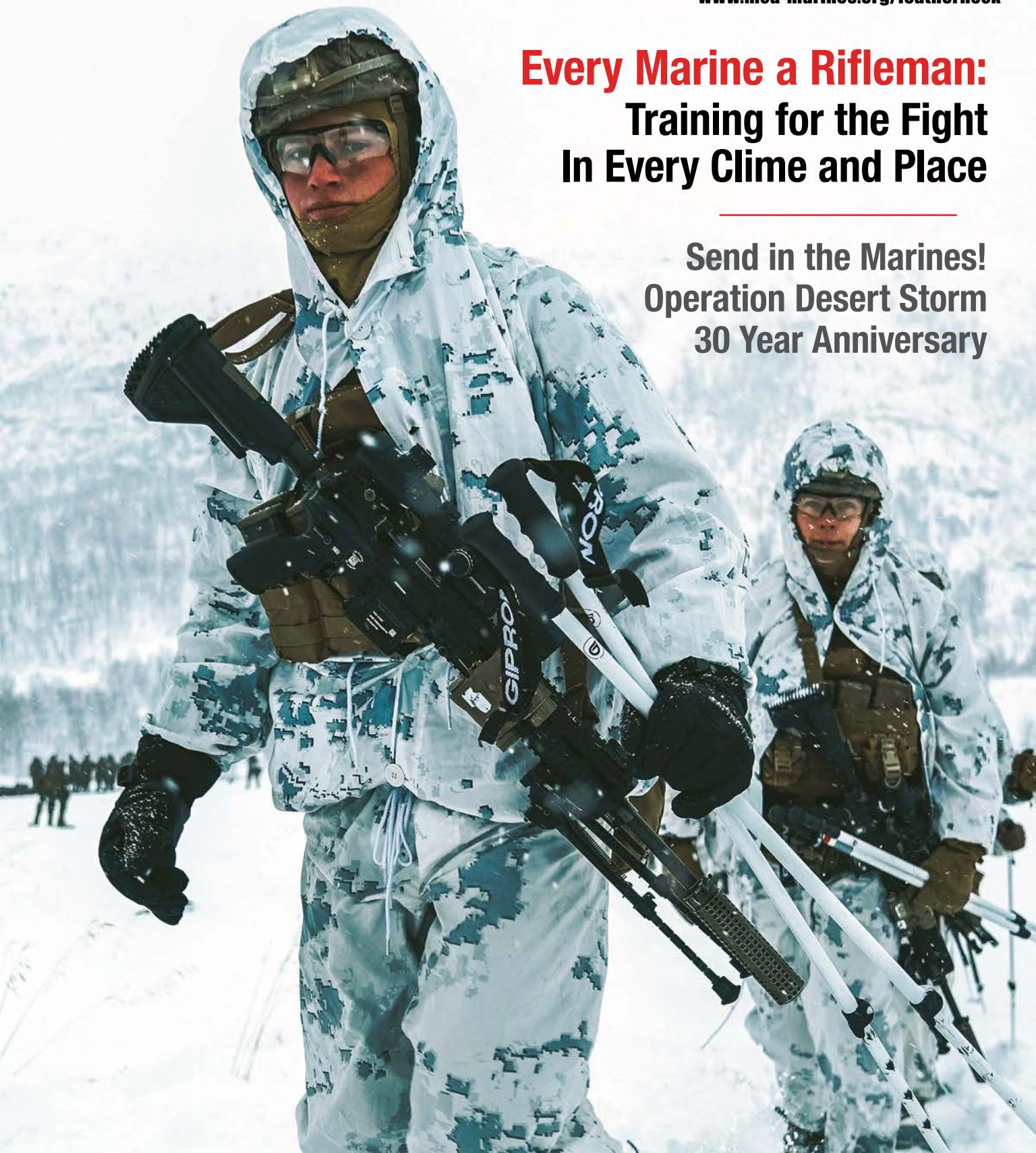
MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

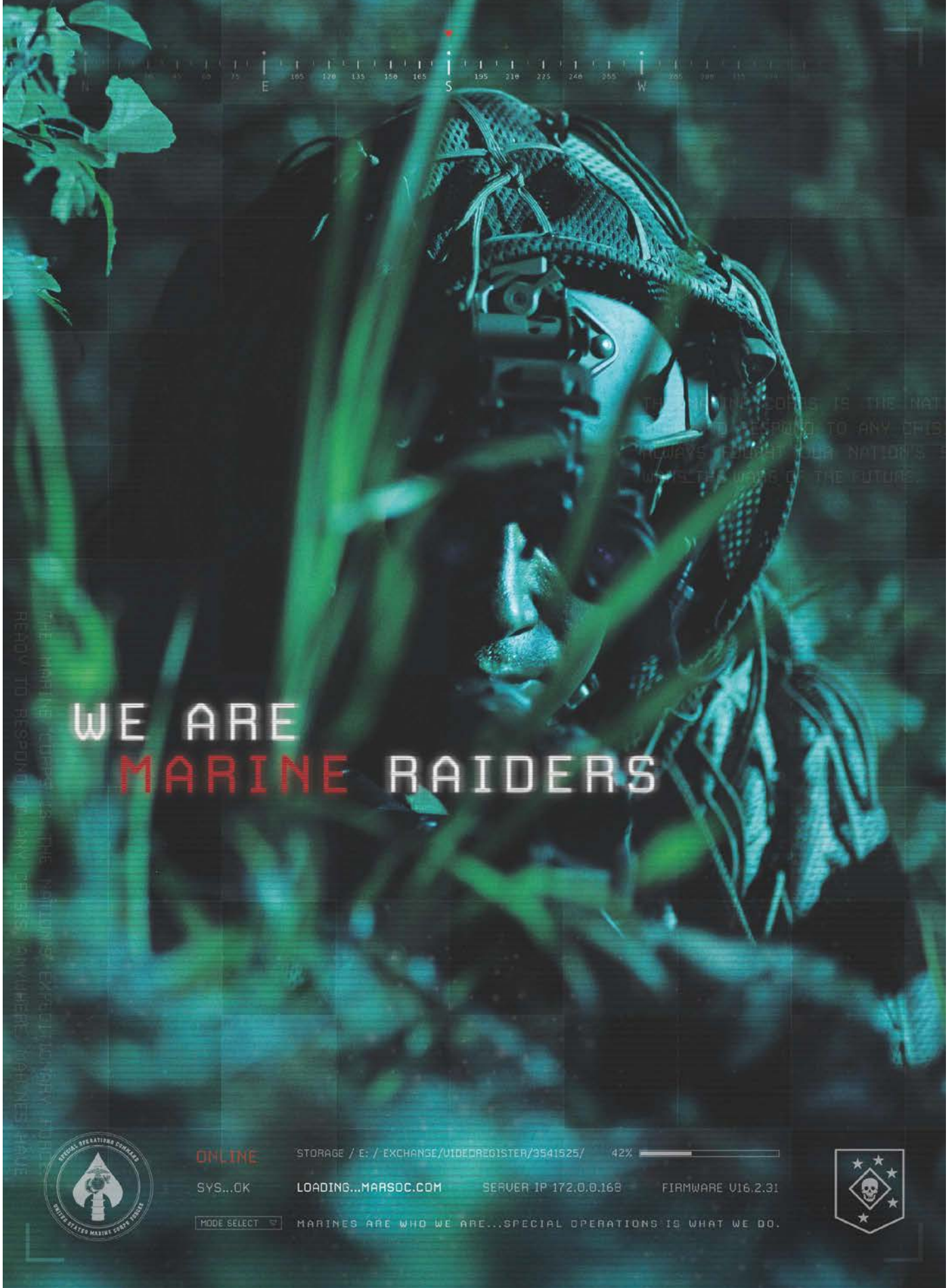
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Letter of the Month

(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.)

My experience with Marine Corps boot camp began on Aug. 13, 1958, and would ultimately prove to be one of the most scary, exciting, confusing, rewarding, meaningful, educational and funny periods of my 80-plus years to date.

I arrived at Parris Island via bus and didn't even get past the front gate before facing the scariest event of my time there. As a naïve 18-year-old country boy from Alabama, I thought I could impress the gate guard by saluting him from inside the bus. What a mistake. The guard immediately entered the bus, came straight to me and in no uncertain terms advised me that he would see to it that I would not get off the island alive. I believed him.

I was assigned to Platoon 290, Company L, under the leadership of senior drill instructor (DI) Staff Sergeant A.J. Brage Jr., and DIs SSgt H.M. Durham and Sergeant J.D. Weets. Sgt Brage and his assistants proved to be the ultimate Marines and I respected them tremendously because they were tough, but fair.

The entire 12 weeks were exciting as there was never a moment when we were not doing something to make us Marines, whether it be drilling, washing clothes, learning discipline, or a myriad of other things specifically designed to make maggots into Marines. The most confusing thing I found and could not understand is the mandate that everyone must rifle qualify right-handed. While I understand the M1 is a left ejecting weapon, I knew that if ever in combat I would shoot left-handed as I have always been extremely left-hand dominant. I cannot close my left eye and keep my right eye open at the same time. This resulted in me having to qualify right-handed by covering my left eye. Having been raised killing small game with a .22-caliber single-shot rifle and being very good at it, I knew I could qualify as expert if allowed to shoot left-handed. Instead, I qualified marksman.

My boot camp experience was doubtless one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. There are few sweeter sounds to me than a well-drilled platoon of recruits in parade with 60-plus heels hitting the

grinder at precisely the same nanosecond and the voice of a salty drill instructor calling cadence. Such music will stay with a Marine for a lifetime.

The funniest part of my time on Parris Island was a platoon member's plot to get back home to his new wife.

We had been there barely two weeks when he approached me with a plan he had concocted that he was sure would work and wanted my opinion. He had somehow rationalized that if you wet the bed you would be discharged and sent home. I argued that was crazy and would perhaps get him discharged via what was then called the POU route. I won't get into what POU was then as it probably no longer exists, but to see those in it made your heart sink. He went forward with his plan and it lasted about three nights with no evidence that the DIs or other maggots except me ever knew. Finally, he came to me and said he could no longer stand the smell of the dampness of his rack, so he was going to try and stick it out. He did make it through and in fact reenlisted and became a lifer.

My four years of active duty allowed me to travel all over the world, and 60 years later, I still keep in touch with Marines I served with and we share sea stories regularly. Such is the Marine Corps I still love to this day. Semper Fi, my brothers and sisters.

Cpl Seth Phelps
Foley, Ala.

Legendary Marine: John Basilone

Thank you and the staff for a beautiful love story, "Free a Marine to Fight: The Silent Legacy of Sergeant Lena Riggi," in the November 2020 issue. In 1962, after Hospital Corps School, I reported to U.S. Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton, Calif. I used to see a road named Basilone and being a boot to Marine Corps history, wondered about Basilone.

On Nov. 10, 2005, the U.S. Postal Service issued commemorative stamps in four designs called "Distinguished Marines," featuring four legendary Marines: John Basilone, Daniel J. Daly, John A. Lejeune and Lewis B. Puller. I used all the stamps except Basilone. I read the history on how Basilone received his Medal of Honor, and I was proud of our men and women who fought to defend our way of life.

I was so glad to have served in our military and all the great men and women I met during my 4 ½ years of active duty.

To this day I still stay "squared away" and appreciate all branches of our great military and the people who protect this great nation.

John Sanchez
Hanford, Calif.

Bravo Zulu for Article About Phonetic Alphabet History

I appreciate Sam Lichtman's interviews and quotes in his article, "From 'Able-Baker' to Today: History of the Phonetic Alphabet," in the December 2020 issue. The phonetic alphabet is a very interesting subject to many and I would guess that few of today's Marines know its history even though more and more units seem to use the Korean War-era phonetic alphabet for their company identifier; "Able" vice "Alpha" for example and "Easy" for "Echo."

It's good to see a Marine Corps Mustang officer like Major Joe Featherston contributing. Plus, the selection of photos to help present the article was a good historical array of significance. The art director, Jason Monroe, did a good job of designing and laying it out, too.

Col Walter G. Ford, USMC (Ret)
Rock Hill, S.C.

• In addition to being an exemplary Marine and example to many with whom he served, Col Ford is a previous editor of Leatherneck. He has known the author, Sam Lichtman, since Sam was a child visiting the Leatherneck offices; Sam is the son of our senior editor, Nancy Lichtman.—Editor

Musician Scored Top Spot

The article, "Your Voice, Your Story: Library of Congress' Veterans History Project Collects, Preserves Firsthand Accounts of Service" by Sara W. Bock in the November 2020 issue of *Leatherneck* magazine was very interesting and well-written. The section about Master Gunner Sergeant Jane Cross, USMC (Ret), and her participation in "The President's Own" United States Marine Band reminded me of an incident that occurred while in boot camp at MCRD, Parris Island in 1968. I was in Plt 112, Co B, 1st Bn, and Marine recruit Daryl J. Booth was also in the platoon. Booth had fired high score on the rifle range and assistant drill instructor Staff Sergeant J.F. Morin congratulated him on his firing the top score and asked him what he was going

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to do in the Marines. Booth's reply was, "I am going to play in the band, Sir." SSgt Morin went ballistic, running up and down the squad bay yelling, "He fired the top score on the rifle range and he's going to play in the band!" I don't think this reaction by SSgt Morin changed Daryl's mind about his MOS since many of us were going to Vietnam as infantry Marines.

Jack Stubbs
Albany, N.Y.

"The Brute" Helped Develop Landing Practices

I enjoyed your story, "Fleet Landing Exercise, 1934-1942," in the December 2020 issue, about the development of amphibious landing practices before and up to World War II. However, I was surprised that nothing was mentioned about how Captain Victor Krulak made note of the use of landing craft with bow doors that opened into ramps for infantry to get on shore. These were Japanese boats (barges) operating in China in the late 1930s. This was mentioned in his biography.

I had the honor of meeting Lieutenant General Krulak in Saigon in 1965 while serving as a Marine Security Guard at the embassy there.

Sgt Howard W. Evers, USMC
North Oxford, Mass.

• *We have previously mentioned LtGen Krulak's role in the implementation of landing crafts for amphibious operations. The October 2016 article "Gallipoli: Where's That?" included then-Capt Krulak's handwritten notes on the photographs he had taken of Japanese landing vehicles in China in 1937.—Editor*

I Don't Understand What He is Thinking

I received my December *Leatherneck* yesterday. I was proud to read, "Salute to Marine Tankers," [Sound Off] submitted by SgtMaj John Harlow and Sgt Gene T. Spanos in honor of Marine tankers. I was not a tanker. I was a Marine artilleryman (0811/0812) for 16 years. Since we were all combat arms, we worked together a lot. The Commandant is disbanding tank and artillery units in the Marine Corps leaving Marines in the fight at the mercy of Army tank and artillery units when they need support. Having attended advanced cannoneers school in Fort Sill, I'm here to tell you precision artillery support is not in the Army's vocabulary. The Army's philosophy toward artillery support is mass steel (spray and pray). If I were a young platoon commander, a platoon sergeant or squad leader in the

fight for his life I would not want to depend on the Army to help. After reading the editor's response to the salute to tankers, I understand what this Commandant is thinking. He wants all Marines to be recon. Ain't happening. God bless our tankers and artilleryman.

SSgt Robert D. Minton
USMC, 1973-1990
Concho, Ariz.

• *While many have expressed similar concerns about depending on the Army for support, the one bright side in the discussion about dissolution of tank units is the passion and loyalty displayed by Marine tankers of all ages. They have been vocal in their disagreement with the CMC's decision in a variety of ways. I will have to add that I'm just a bit confused as to how my response to Sgt Spanos' letter in the December Sound Off led you to believe the Commandant wants all Marines to be recon. I simply clarified that he wasn't a career recon Marine having only done one tour in the community.—Editor*

Network's Description of Movie Is Unsatisfactory

I was recently pleased to note that the premium television network, "Showtime," had listed and briefly described the film, "Full Metal Jacket," indicating that it would soon be shown as one of that broadcast system's many forthcoming offerings. However, I was disappointed and more than a little disturbed to see that the person or persons responsible for preparing the movie's promotional synopsis had referred to the character of the senior drill instructor as being a sadist.

Because my Parris Island experience had coincided roughly with the eight-week time span reflected in the film's version of Marine Corps recruit training, I found the trials and tribulations experienced by various members of the fictional platoon to be absolutely familiar. When I viewed the film for the first time following its theater release in 1987, I nodded and smiled with an acknowledgement that I was watching a movie truly grounded in reality.

That realism extended to the depiction of the senior drill instructor, and what he said and did on the screen was, I found, an absolute genuine reflection of what I had observed and endured in 1966. I have also considered what one can make of his pronouncements and deeds. And, after 54 years of reflection as well as the good fortune of having a career that allowed me to oversee and judge teaching skills from kindergarten to doctoral levels, I can assert without doubt that the real as well as fictional Parris Island instructional

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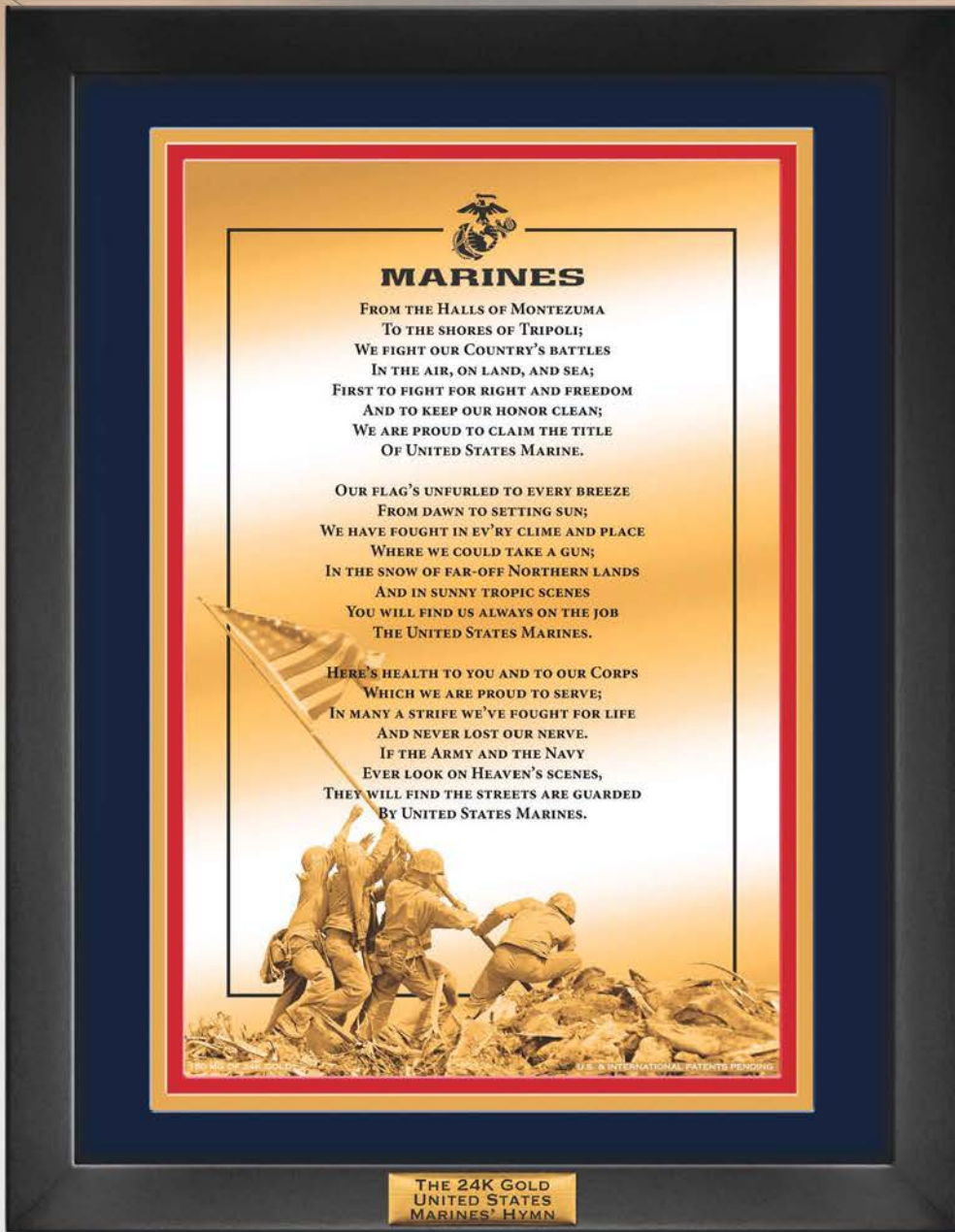
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procedure of employing highly stringent senior drill instructor teaching strategies and methodologies are, given the desired outcome, pedagogically sound and far from sadistic.

The fourth edition of “Roget’s International Thesaurus” lists kind, gentle and nice as opposites from the word sadistic and it would admittedly be difficult to find a recruit who would use anything approaching those terms to describe the senior drill instructor’s treatment of him and others during those important first weeks of Parris Island training. On the other hand, when all things including the Marine Corps’ fighting spirit and glorious traditions are considered, those three laudable antonyms are not far off the mark.

Cpl William K. Bauer
USMC, 1966-1967
Largo, Fla.

Article Stirs Up Gridiron Regrets

The article in the November 2020 *Leatherneck*, “Football Phenoms” by Colonel Keith Oliver, USMC (Ret), was very interesting and fully explained the important role of football in the Marine Corps. I was in boot camp at MCRD Parris Island, Plt 112, 1st Bn, in early 1968. One day, Senior Drill Instructor



COURTESY OF JACK STUBBS

Senior DI SSgt R.A. Schaad and PFC J. Stubbs during boot camp graduation near the Iwo Jima Memorial on the parade deck at Parris Island.

(DI) Staff Sergeant R.A. Schaad called me to the DI hut. Everyone knew if you got called to the DI hut you were in trouble, so this was not a good situation. SSgt Schaad said he read in my record that I had attended college. I responded that

I had attended a year at Cortland State College as a physical education major and had wrestled and played football. He asked me if I could teach. I replied, “Yes, Sir.” SSgt Schaad wanted me to provide extra instruction for the platoon on the material

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we would be tested on during boot camp. Each night I would conduct these training sessions in the head for 30 to 40 recruits. Then he asked me if I would be interested in playing football for the Marine Corps. I asked what would be involved and he said, "Re-up for six years." As a two-year enlistee with one tour guaranteed in Vietnam, I was thinking this could result in two or three tours if I lived. As a 0331 MOS this did not seem like a good deal. This article has me thinking, 52 years later, that I may have made a mistake.

Jack Stubbs
Albany, N.Y.

Marine Steps Up in Time of Need

My uncle, Major John C. Hoogerwerff, USMC (Ret), passed away after a battle with dementia. He'd been a Marine forever but when he died, the uniform and things I'd been given to bury him in were the wrong things. I posted on Facebook asking for help because I had no idea what to do and the funeral was fast approaching. I got an answer right away from a Marine by the name of Gunnery Sergeant Paul Nichols, USMC (Ret). He lives near Quantico Marine Corps Base and I live near Washington, D.C., and he offered to meet me there the next day.

We met at the base uniform shop and

the people there went so far out of their way to help and were so nice. I had my uncle's uniform, medals and shoes and the uniform shop helped with every single thing. They glued things back onto the medals that had come off and they looked perfect on the uniform. His shoes were shined, his cover was clean, his sword was polished, and his gloves were perfect. The uniform shop went one step further and printed out information so we could make sure things were set up properly at the funeral. My uncle would have been so honored by the care this complete stranger took. GySgt Nichols went so far as to attend the burial at Arlington National Cemetery and was very helpful. He was the last to leave the gravesite. I just want to say how cool Marines are.

Mary Vargo
Potomac, Md.

Puzzling Questions

There are many questions I have regarding U.S. Marine Corps trivia, but the most puzzling are these: Why are there sometimes two Marines at the President's helicopter, Marine One? Both are in dress blues but one is under arms and I don't think he travels with the helicopter.

Secondly, there is a memorandum of understanding between the Marine Corps

and the Department of State dating back to at least 1965, and updated yearly, concerning the use of Marine Security Guards as personal security officers under certain circumstances. Strangely, the DOS cannot find this document after a FOI request, and the Marine Embassy Guard school in Quantico states that there is such a document, not classified, but not available to the public.

Sgt Howard W. Evers
USMC, 1965-1967
North Oxford, Mass.

Boots on the Ground at Gitmo

Back in October of 1962, I was stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif., assigned TAD to the 1st Marine Drum and Bugle Corps. These orders were immediately rescinded, and I was sent back to a line company as an 0311 rifleman. My then obsolete M1 Garand was exchanged for an M14 and along with the rest of the 1st Division, I was sent off to "Gitmo."

Back in 2012, the Smithsonian Institution published photos to commemorate the 50th anniversary of what came to be known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. I noticed that all the photos were taken from the air and I inquired where were the photos taken with boots on the ground. I

[continued on page 66]

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In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

SYRIA

EOD Techs Exploit Captured Anti-Armor Missile System

U.S. Marine Corps Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) technicians completed a multi-day exploitation of illicit ordnance turned over by Syrian Democratic Forces in Syria, the Marine Corps announced Dec. 2, 2020.

Specialists with Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force-Crisis Response-Central Command conducted a detailed examination of four AT-4B Spigot Anti-Tank Guided Missiles, which were recently obtained by partner forces in southern Syria.

“Our explosive ordnance disposal technicians are uniquely qualified to disassemble a wide range of foreign munitions,” said Captain Joshua Hays, the SPMAGTF-CR-CC spokesperson. “During the exploitation process, EOD technicians were able to gather valuable weapons data and retrieve biometric information to be analyzed. The final results assist partner forces in understanding both advanced weapons employment and provide a better understanding of illicit weapons trafficking patterns in the region.”

According to EOD Marines in the Middle East, one of the four missiles recovered was malfunctioning and would likely have deviated significantly from its intended flight path if fired. Although

exact details surrounding the weapon system arriving in Syria were unknown at the time, the forensic data collected will help partner forces continue clearing out ordnance that threatens innocent bystanders.

In 2020 alone, approximately 100 individual pieces of ordnance were processed and destroyed by Marine EOD technicians with SPMAGTF-CR-CC. Of these items, nearly 30 percent were manufactured in either Russia or Iran. By removing this non-precise missile system from the battlefield, both the Syrian Democratic Forces and coalition forces reduce the potential risk of collateral damage to civilians in the region.

The coalition continues to advise and assist partner forces in Syria to enable them to continue their fight against the Islamic State group.

Capt Joshua Hays, USMC

SAVANETA, ARUBA

Coastal Caribbean Warrior: Marines Train in Tropical Waters

Marines with “Charlie” Company, 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division traveled nearly 1,600 miles to participate in Exercise Coastal Caribbean Warrior, where they conducted open-water and dive training with Netherlands Marines from the 32nd Raiding Squadron in Savaneta, Aruba, on Nov. 7, 2020.

The training increases interoperability between the Netherlands Marine Corps and U.S. Marines as they work side-by-side as partner nations. The Marines of 2nd Recon Bn, stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., don’t often have the opportunity to work in tropical waters like those that surround the Caribbean island of Aruba, which belongs to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. To further develop the relationship between the two nations, the Dutch Marines were in turn scheduled to travel to Camp Lejeune to perfect their own tactics in a foreign climate and to perform myriad other types of training in the United States.

“The training circumstances here in Aruba are optimal,” said Netherlands Marine Corps Captain Mark Brouwer, a Dutch exchange officer embedded with 2nd Recon Bn. “We have everything in place here to train a lot better than we could’ve on Camp Lejeune. On top of that, the skills we teach to 2nd Recon, we do here on a daily basis,” he added.

“This is really a unique opportunity,” said Capt Joshua Foster, the commander of C Co, 2nd Recon Bn. “The Dutch Marines’ subject-matter expertise in coastal tropics is invaluable to preparing us for combat situations in foreign regions.”

The 32nd Raiding Squadron is regarded as an essential line of defense for the island of Aruba. Their effectiveness in conducting open-water operations and their integration with their naval counterparts represent vital skills for 2nd Recon Bn to hone. This bilateral training increases proficiency in a variety of skills necessary to complete their mission.

“There is nowhere else we could’ve trained with a full troop of Dutch frogmen,” said Foster. “The environment here in Aruba is better suited to developing the skills that will help us in future operations, and it really helps us to integrate with the Dutch who will be a really strong partner in the event we have to operate in Eastern Europe or the high North.”

Marines with 2nd Recon Bn completed a visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) training package as well as dive training and a series of firing ranges. Being able to learn from the Netherlands Marines in their primary area of operations helps 2nd Recon Bn build a faster, more mobile and more lethal force when operating in such diverse locations.

“The training is helping us build new



CAPT JOSHUA HAYS, USMC

An AT-4B Spigot Anti-Tank Guided Missile System captured in Syria is displayed following an ordnance exploitation operation by Marine EOD technicians with SPMAGTF-CR-CC, Nov. 27, 2020. During the exploitation process, EOD technicians were able to gather valuable weapons data and retrieve biometric information to be analyzed.



LCPL BRIAN BOLIN JR., USMC

Marines with Co C, 2nd Recon Bn, 2ndMarDiv participate in VBSS training with Netherlands Marines from the 32nd Raiding Squadron near Savaneta, Aruba, Nov. 13, 2020.



LCPL BRIAN BOLIN JR., USMC

Cpl Louis Newton, left, and Cpl Jake Lindell, right, recon Marines with Co C, 2nd Recon Bn, 2ndMarDiv, participate in dive training in the waters off the coast of Aruba, Nov. 20, 2020. Mastery of dive skills is crucial to the battalion's ability to integrate effectively with its naval counterparts.

unit operating procedures," said Sergeant Zachary Palmgren, a team leader with 2nd Recon Bn. "The water is clear so the dive teams can see what they're doing and better build on the foundations they have. The VBSS training helps us integrate with the Dutch, and it shows us a more real-

world application for the training we do at home."

By working together, Marines from both nations developed a better understanding of how to implement new techniques. This type of bilateral training is critical, particularly when fighting in littoral and

coastal regions. The battalion's mastery of these skills is paramount if its Marines are to integrate effectively with their own naval counterparts.

LCpl Brian Bolin Jr., USMC

CAMP SHELBY, MISS. Marine Raiders, 1/6 Simulate War In "Topaz"

In the simulated third-world country of "Topaz," otherwise known as Mississippi, Marines and Sailors of "Bravo" Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division took on simulated roles of "local militia" members, aiding critical skills operators from Marine Special Operations Company A. During November 2020, Exercise Raven 21-03, a predeployment unit readiness exercise, utilized the conventional infantry skills of 1/6 to evaluate the Marine Raiders' capabilities to cooperate with an outside entity while still completing their mission sets.

After breaking into four teams, 1/6 spread across four different areas of Mississippi, each with a small attachment of Marine Raiders to lead training. On the first day, the Marines were given their roles: they were directed to act as local military from a fictitious country called Topaz, aiding Marine Raiders against



LCPL JACQUELINE PARSONS, USMC

During Exercise Raven, Marines with Co B, 1/6 and Special Operations Co A, 1st Marine Raider Bn rehearse detaining procedures while conducting an objective raid at Camp Shelby, Miss., Nov. 16, 2020.

a simulated opposing force made up of contracted civilian role players.

“Exercise Raven is unique because it gives the Raiders the opportunity to conduct full spectrum operations with a joint force as part of our accreditation for deployment,” said Major Gabriel Flores, the commanding officer of Marine Special Operations Co A. “It’s our chance to evaluate and compare ourselves to the rest of the MARSOC formation.”

During the exercise, the Marine Raiders taught daily classes on close quarter breaching, detaining, tactical combat casualty care and exploiting sensitive information from objective areas. This training follows a curriculum that 1/6 is accustomed to but went into greater depth and provided new approaches and perspectives on standards.

“This training is definitely taking us to the next level,” said Sergeant Joshua Cardenas, a rifleman with Bravo Co, 1/6. “Even though we’re here to support the Raiders, the things they have taught us are so valuable and are a huge benefit to the unit.”

After the classroom portions of the training, the teams began raid rehearsals. Evaluators supervised each component of the operation from the action on the ground to the tactical decisions being made back

at the tactical operation center. Exercise Raven tested more than Co A’s ability to reach objectives—the company also was tested in areas like administration, logistics and cyber operations.

Upon conclusion of Exercise Raven, the Marines of 1/6 had enhanced their ability

to integrate with other units, employ small units to obtain objectives and successfully disable terrorist threats from destabilized countries.

LCpl Jacqueline Parsons, USMC

OKINAWA, JAPAN Seabees, Marines Power III MEF Installations, Facilities

Day in and day out, U.S. Navy Seabees work to fulfill their motto “We build, we fight, we do,” by training General Facility (GF) Marines in a joint effort to help protect and maintain III Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Corps Installations Pacific facilities.

When a service ticket is issued on Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Okinawa, Japan, GF Marines shadow Seabees to learn their side of the job. Seabees are trained to build and maintain permanent structures while Marines are trained in expedient construction and maintenance. The training is hands-on, teaching Marines how to build, plumb and power structures for long-term use.

General Facilities provides services to servicemembers and families working and living on Marine Corps installations and to III MEF forward-deployed forces while in garrison. Within GF, Seabees help cross-train Marines on various aspects of the job to stay equipped for mission success.

“My role is a trainer and supervisor,” said Construction Electrician 2nd Class Ira Mozee with Headquarters & Support Battalion. “I am in charge of the Marines’ safety and ensuring the job is finished in an efficient and timely manner.”

According to Lance Corporal Junel Rex Coloma, a clerk with GF, “fog of war” is



CPL KARIS MATTINGLY, USMC

LCpl Junel Rex Coloma, a clerk with GF, replaces an outlet during on-the-job training with Navy Seabees aboard MCAS Futenma, Okinawa, Japan, Nov. 30, 2020. The hands-on training taught the Marines how to build, plumb and power structures for long-term use.

always a potential threat within an operating force. However, continuous training with Seabees helps turn knowledge into instinct.

“We are the backbone to expeditionary construction forces,” explained Mozee.

In one of the most well-known fields in the Navy, approximately 7,000 active-duty Seabees assist in wartime construction, aid in humanitarian efforts worldwide and are responsible for emergency and corrective maintenance.

“I like working with the Marines and building that foundational relationship with them,” said Mozee. “Working together strengthens camaraderie between the forces, and when a task needs to get done, we are more equipped to complete the mission by working with our force counterparts.”

GF provides engineering, utilities management, real property maintenance and repair support. As engineer and utility Marines, their primary focus is expeditionary construction. Mission success for GF Marines is acquiring the skill set to

build structures in a timely manner while using tools that are easily accessible.

“We build up this brotherhood with the Navy and get a broader perspective on how inter-branch relations work within our job,” said Coloma. “Learning from Seabees makes me more confident and effective than if we were to only work within the Marine Corps. In the military, we are first responders, and being prepared for any sudden contingencies is vital.”

Cpl Karis Mattingly, USMC

**CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C.
FORT DRUM, N.Y.
FORT A.P. HILL, VA.
MEFEX Takes Marines,
NATO Allies Along East Coast**

Marines and Sailors with II Marine Expeditionary Force concluded MEF Exercise (MEFEX) 21.1, which took place at Fort Drum, N.Y.; Fort A.P. Hill, Va.; and Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Nov. 4-13, 2020. During the exercise, they trained alongside NATO allies from Norway’s Brigade North, the French



LCPL SCOTT JENKINS, USMC

LCpl Ashlee Ford, a combat engineer with 2nd MLG, reloads during a squad defense range as part of MEFEX 21.1 at Fort Drum, N.Y., Nov. 7, 2020. The MEF-level exercise involved approximately 1,200 Marines and Sailors and took place at various locations along the East Coast.

SETERMOEN, NORWAY



CPL WILLIAM CHOCKEY, USMC

NORTHERN LIGHTS—A Marine with Marine Rotational Force-Europe 21.1 stands watch during cold weather training in preparation for Exercise Reindeer II in Setermoen, Norway, Nov. 12, 2020. Reindeer II is a bilateral training exercise hosted by the Norwegian military to increase support capabilities between NATO allies in extreme conditions.



LCPL KELLEN D. MEDINA, USMC

Marines with II MEF Information Group clear their masks during an open field gas chamber training at Fort A.P. Hill, Va., during MEFEX 21.1, Nov. 9, 2020.

Army's 6th Light Armoured Brigade, and the United Kingdom's Royal Marine 3rd Commando, as well as U.S. Navy partners with Second Fleet.

Combat service support and administrative training and logistical support for the MEF Command Element was provided by II Marine Expeditionary Support Battalion (MSB). Additionally, II MSB's

commander also served as the camp commandant for all tenants at Fort A.P. Hill and provided "life support" to a nearly 1,000-person camp.

"We have a diverse group of talented Marines and Sailors across II MSB," said Lieutenant Colonel Robert Fairley, commanding officer of II MSB. "Exercises such as MEFEX 21.1 provide our

battalion with unique opportunities to come together and position ourselves to best support the MEF Command Element in a deployed environment."

MEFEX 21.1 enhanced command and control and interoperability with allies and partners, focused on facing a near-peer threat in the European theater and synchronized II MEF with its subordinate commands from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, 2nd Marine Division, 2nd Marine Logistics Group and II Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group.

"This peer-level exercise is focused upon a peer-level adversary where II MEF is dependent upon working with our allies and fleet partners," said Lieutenant General Brian D. Beaudreault, the commanding general of II MEF. "This is very much a joint-combined exercise against a near-peer threat."

MEFEX 21.2 is scheduled to take place this spring.

2ndLt Eric Bohnenkamp, USMC



LCPL SCOTT JENKINS, USMC

Cpl Daniel Start, left, and LCpl Gauge Holt, right, fire a Mk 19 grenade launcher at Fort Drum, N.Y., Nov. 8, 2020, during MEFEX 21.1.

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The Maneuverist



Marines with Co C, 1st Bn, 6th Marine Regiment, assigned to 3rdMarDiv under the Unit Deployment Program, conduct live-fire maneuver drills on Camp Schwab, Okinawa, Japan, June 18, 2020.

By Sgt McLennan S. Janes, USMC

Editor's note: The following article received an honorable mention in the 2020 Leatherneck Writing Contest. Major Richard A. "Rick" Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest, which is open to enlisted Marines, through the Marine Corps Association & Foundation. The 2021 contest is open until March 31.

In the operational spectrum, a boundary is a control measure used to delineate surface areas to facilitate coordination and deconfliction between adjacent units. While this is a mechanism designed to encourage cross-talk between unit commanders in relative proximity to one another, it often generates a prod-

uct counter to its intent. As a maneuver element, boundaries might be received as a sign reading "KEEP OUT, VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED." At face value, the reader may realize that there are several second- and third-order consequences that could result from the implementation of this maneuver control measure.

In July of 1989, General Anthony Zinni, then a colonel, addressed that implication in his professional military education (PME) course "Combat Concepts." Zinni recounted his experiences with boundaries in Vietnam, stating, "A boundary is a seam. I learned from the VC [Viet Cong] that they'll try and probe for and identify your boundaries. Why? Because we stay away from them—because if you get too

close, you're forced to coordinate with the son of a bitch next to you. We box ourselves in, and create seams, stitches even." As any infantry unit leader knows, the enemy will begin to unravel if you attack the seams. The importance of Gen Zinni's concern here isn't specifically the boundary, but the microcosm it represents—a much broader weakness in our Marine Corps.

Throughout his career, Gen Zinni addressed these self-imposed constraints applied within our war-fighting organization and challenged his leaders not to fall victim to rigid procedures. Through encouraging the intense scrutiny of established standards and dedicating himself to the analysis and understanding of maneuver warfare, Gen Zinni is a leader



Gen Anthony Zinni

Gen Zinni expresses in Combat Concepts that unit leaders at all levels must constantly call into question the procedures and tactics utilized on the battlefield today, and that there isn't any singular procedure one can apply to expect positive results in the tactical arena.

whose teachings should be reflected upon and reinforced at every level in the United States Marine Corps.

Anthony C. Zinni was born on Sept. 17, 1943, to a Pennsylvanian working-class family of Italian immigrants. Zinni later described himself as “a dirtball straight off the streets of Philadelphia.” His father was a corporal in World War I with a “third-rate education,” and his brother was a sergeant in the Korean War. After graduating from Villanova University with a degree in economics, he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps. An almost cookie-cutter representation of the American dream, Zinni was assigned as an infantry battalion advisor to the Vietnamese Marine Corps and later

served as a rifle company commander in 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, where he was wounded in action. His experiences in Vietnam would be the dominant influence in his teachings while serving as an operations and tactics instructor at the Marine Corps Command and Staff College at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va. While Gen Zinni would have a long and illustrious career beyond this portioned version of his background, Gen Zinni's legacy lies in what he has offered the institution that prides itself on rigid obedience and unbent standards.

Gen Zinni expresses in Combat Concepts that unit leaders at all levels must constantly call into question the procedures and tactics utilized on the battlefield today, and that there isn't any singular

Below: During his second tour in Vietnam, Capt Anthony Zinni served as a company commander in 1st Bn, 5th Marines and received the Purple Heart for wounds received in action. Here he is seen with his platoon commanders, First Lieutenants Hughes, Myer, Lt Beckett, Lt Nelson and Ray.



CPL JOSUE MARQUEZ, USMC

COURTESY OF GEN ANTHONY C. ZINNI, USMC (RET)



COURTESY OF GEN ANTHONY C. ZINNI, USMC (RET)

procedure one can apply to expect positive results in the tactical arena. Everything from standard forms of maneuver to the rifleman's gear should be addressed and re-evaluated to suit the tactical dilemma on the ground. Zinni even goes as far as arguing against the helmet and flak jacket: "I'm an anti-flak jacket and helmet guy, I don't believe in them. I think we oughtta shit can 'em. For every guy who can say, 'this saved my life,' there's 87 guys who were so worn out, they didn't see the bad guy and got caught in an ambush. It's counter to mobility."

Gen Zinni frequently scrutinized established and accepted constructs in the Marine Corps. In Vietnam, he came to the sober realization that the training he received in Quantico didn't effectively replicate the realities of combat, saying, "When you went to hit 'em, or went to envelop them—like they taught you at The Basic School—you'd get screwed.

You'd try a masterful turning movement to come in, and the bastard got you again. You couldn't get your hands around him; he had too many sides. We're in boxes and lines all the time, and it doesn't work." Zinni argued that we force ourselves into believing through our own training that the battlefield is a linear construct; as a result, we train to an arbitrary standard that isn't a reality in combat.

While these arguments were made before the Gulf War, our practices continue to remain in line three decades later. In the integrated training exercise (ITX), every unit prior to its deployment must first go through a series of operations evaluated by the Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group (TTECG). The vast majority of these operations are largely in a rigid and inflexible sequence that fosters anything but critical thinking or tactical nuance. Units even go as far as to develop scripts for what is supposed

Left: One of the earliest assignments for the future commander of I Marine Expeditionary Force and U.S. Central Command was as an advisor to the Vietnamese Marine Corps.



Marines with 1st Bn, 24th Marine Regiment, 4thMarDiv, awaited instructions for a live-fire and maneuver range during their annual training exercise on Camp Grayling, Mich., Aug. 18, 2020. (Photo by LCpl Leslie Alcaraz, USMC)

to be simulated combat. To TTECG's credit, the advent of the Maneuver Warfare Exercise (MWX) has created opportunities for true free play, but this serves as only a small percentage of the training Marines experience throughout the conduct of ITX.

Throughout his teachings on maneuver warfare, Zinni acknowledges we as a Marine Corps—even in the modern era—frequently fall victim to attrition-based tactics. A frequent culprit in this thinking is the standard table of organization upon which infantry units rely. Rather than a thorough analysis in the application and appropriation of combat power during an operation, we frequently standardize the distribution of forces, resulting in a balancing act that doesn't address the dilemma at hand. A primary example Zinni details as "the essence of maneuver warfare" is the 3rd Marine Division under General Graves B. Erskine on Iwo Jima. In arguably the most attrition-based conflict in the Marine Corps' history, Erskine displayed every quality of a maneuverist. "He continually shifted organization. He put all 26 of his tanks into one battalion, and then he'd spread them out. He took the mortars out of every battalion and gave them to one regiment." He attributed to Erskine the unique ability to apply combat power where necessary, rather than succumbing to the pressures of his subordinate commanders' perceived needs.

Regarding decentralization—a key hallmark of maneuver warfare—Zinni recalled one force-on-force exercise he conducted as a regimental commander. "It was midnight, and my S-3 officer turns to me and says, 'You know what, Colonel? Right now, we know more about the exact positions of the enemy than we do our own positions.' Then, we tried to figure out if that was wrong." The purpose of decentralization in Marine Corps operational structure is to facilitate the freedom of small unit leaders to develop and make decisions without relying on higher leadership's direct instruction as long as their decisions are in line with the commander's intent. He continued, "We talked about it a while and figured that's OK! I don't need to know where everyone is;



LCPL SEAN M. EVANS, USMC


ROK Marines conducted a live-fire platoon attack exercise with U.S. Marines and Sailors with 1st Bn, 3rd Marines, also known as "The Lava Dogs," during the Korean Marine Exchange Program in South Korea, April 12, 2016. The program was designed to increase interoperability and camaraderie between U.S. Marines and ROK Marines.

they're doing their thing, they're happy. I know where the bad guys are, don't worry, be happy!"

As maneuver warfare goes, Zinni understood and encouraged his subordinate commanders to seize the initiative, or simply put, to act in the face of uncertainty. Rather than concerning themselves with vertical communication in the form of position reports and situation updates, he released them to communicate laterally among one another, tackling the known enemy disposition provided by higher.

Gen Zinni continued to progress in rank and billet accomplishments throughout his

long career. He served as the commanding general for I Marine Expeditionary Force and later served as the commander of U.S. Central Command. Even after retirement, he continued to serve in several diplomatic posts vying for Middle Eastern peace. Gen Zinni dedicated his life's work to the development and furtherance of the Marine Corps. It is therefore an imperative we sustain his teachings and develop our war-fighting functions, so they live up to the concepts in our doctrine. As our adversaries continue to shift and the threats our nation faces today remain fluid, Gen Zinni's guidance persists. As a leader and as a maneuverist, Gen Anthony C. Zinni stands the test of time.

Author's bio: Sgt Janes is an anti-tank missileman who is currently serving as a Combined Anti-Armor Team (CAAT) Section Leader in 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines. He previously served with 1st Bn, 7th Marines, in Weapons Company & "Suicide Charley" respectively. He is currently preparing to return to Twenty-nine Palms with 2/7. 

Rather than a thorough analysis in the application and appropriation of combat power during an operation, we frequently standardize the distribution of forces, resulting in a balancing act that doesn't address the dilemma at hand.



Sgt William "Bill" Genaust

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Many have watched the old 16 mm colored film of the American flag-raising over Mount Suribachi during the battle of Iwo Jima. Fewer are aware of the life and legacy of the man behind the camera. His name was Bill Genaust, and he was a combat photographer and sergeant of Marines.

William Homer "Bill" Genaust served in the United States Marine Corps from February 1943 until March 1945. He was born and raised in the American Midwest

The Selfless Spirit of Sgt Bill Genaust

By LCpl Payton Hearn, USMC

and, at the age of 36, felt a call to action against the growing threat in the western Pacific—The Empire of Japan. Shortly after enlisting, Genaust attended combat camera training in Quantico, Va. After completing this training, he was sent to take part in the deadly first days of the Battle of Saipan.

In July of 1944, less than one month into the fierce combat that overtook the island of Saipan, Sergeant Genaust was sent to help secure the island. Heavy fighting ensued, and Sgt Genaust was wounded after Japanese artillery shells landed on his position. After medical evacuation was arranged for him, he kindly refused, simply saying that he wouldn't need it.

Days before the island was declared "secure," Sgt Genaust and two other Marines were returning from a mission to gather supplies when they were ambushed by approximately 20 Japanese soldiers. The three men immediately returned fire. The two Marines who were with him, another photographer named Howard McClue and an infantry scout, ran back to friendly lines to get aid from other Marines nearby. Sgt Genaust was unaware that he had been abandoned and continued to fight off the attacking Japanese soldiers

alone. Assuming his comrades had been injured and were unable to respond to his calls, he continued to fight off the assault for another hour. When reinforcements arrived, Sgt Genaust was found, still fighting, with nine dead Japanese bodies around his position. While returning to friendly lines, Genaust was shot through the leg by an enemy marksman.

Sgt Genaust was treated at a field hospital and offered the chance to return to Pearl Harbor and recover from his injuries. Instead of returning to Hawaii, he volunteered to help in the taking of the island of Iwo Jima.

The battle of Iwo Jima would ultimately last for five weeks and more than 24,000 Marines would become casualties. For their actions during the battle, 27 U.S. Marines and Sailors would receive the Medal of Honor, and more than half of those would be awarded posthumously.

On Feb. 23, 1945, a platoon of Marines under the charge of First Lieutenant Harold G. Shrier were assigned to seize the peak of Mount Suribachi. At 10:20 a.m. on that Friday, the American flag was raised over the summit. The resulting roar of Marines, Sailors, and ship horns cheering at the sight of the flag echoed through the hills



A still shot (above) from Genaust's film of the flag raising on Iwo Jima on Feb. 23, 1945. In the image on the right, Sgt Genaust, motion picture camera in hand, left, and photographer Joe Rosenthal capture what became known as the "Gung Ho" image, taken atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima, Feb. 23, 1945.



PVT ROBERT H. CAMPBELL, USMC



Sgt Bill Genaust, left, and Cpl Atlee S. Tracy, Marine combat cameramen who filmed battles during World War II, have a smoke in their temporary home on Iwo Jima, Feb. 24, 1945.

PVT ROBERT H. CAMPBELL
USMC

and was heard by Japanese soldiers emplaced in caves nearby.

Under orders of Colonel Chandler Johnson, a larger flag was to be taken to the peak to replace the original smaller flag. During this time, Joe Rosenthal of the Associated Press, along with Sgt Genaust, were making the climb to the peak. The photographers reached the peak as six Marines were replacing the original flag. Together, the photographers stood, nearly shoulder-to-shoulder, and recorded, Rosenthal taking still images and Genaust filming, the famous moments that are ingrained in the mind of every U.S. Marine.

Although U.S. troops had taken control of Mount Suribachi, fighting continued across the island. On March 3, 1945, Sgt Genaust found himself on the northern portion of the island, helping seize control of Hill 362-A. During the fighting, a large force of Japanese soldiers retreated into an extensive cave system on the hill. After using explosives to attempt to clear the cave, one Marine asked Genaust if they could use his flashlight to clear the rest of the cave system. Genaust instead volunteered to clear the caves himself.

Right: In his eyewitness account of Genaust's death, Pvt Robert H. Campbell wrote: "Bill met his death through helping, beyond the call of duty, others who were in a huge cave. ... His body was still at the entrance of this cave and covered by tons of earth as we left the island."



USMC

Flashlight in hand, he entered the cave system and was met with a large number of surviving Japanese soldiers. Unable to see anything but the light of Genaust's flashlight, the enemy soldiers fired upon him, killing him instantly.

Unable to re-enter the cave system to retrieve Genaust's body and clear the remaining enemy, the other Marines detonated TNT charges at the mouth of the cave, sealing away forever the emplaced enemy and the remains of Sgt William Genaust.

On March 4, 1945, William Homer Genaust was declared missing in action. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star with combat "V" and the Purple Heart with one gold star.

To this day, William Genaust is classified as missing in action as his remains were never recovered from beneath the soil of Hill 362-A. He is among those honored by every MIA/POW memorial and every Iwo Jima statue standing proudly over Marine Corps bases and is among those responsible for bringing to light the harrowing events of that 36-day battle for control of Iwo Jima and for carrying on the fighting spirit of every Marine before him.

Author's bio: LCpl Payton Hearn is a Marine from Minneapolis, Minn. After enlisting in 2016, he spent two years learning Chinese at the Defense Language Institute and is now stationed in Hawaii.



SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

Recruit Took Matters Into His Own Hands

I was a member of Platoon 2028 at Parris Island in 1967. When we went to the rifle range, we always had a schedule to maintain. As soon as we were finished with chow, we had to step outside on our designated platoon spaces, pick up the Marine Corps Manual (our Bible), and read, while waiting for our drill instructor (DI) to come out and march us to our next appointment.

One day we were outside waiting and waiting, and no drill instructor was in sight. One of the recruits had really picked up on marching cadence and before we knew it, he had stepped outside of the platoon and yelled, "Right face!" The rest of the platoon did exactly that and he proceeded to march the platoon toward the rifle range.

A few blocks away we hear a very upset sergeant yelling and screaming, "Where the #&*& are you maggots going and who is the %&#* leading you?" while running toward us. The recruit who had initiated this stopped the platoon and told the DI, "Sir, you said we were never to be late going anywhere and since you were late, I thought it was better for me to lead the way, Sir!"

By the way, the name of that DI was Staff Sergeant W.F. Morelock. He was killed in action in Vietnam in September 1968. May he rest in peace.

Cpl Joe Botero
USMC, 1967-1969
Dorothy, N.J.

Escape and Evasion Survival Drill

Prior to deploying to Vietnam, an escape and evasion survival school at MCAS Cherry Point was set up for aircrews, and I was in one of the earliest groups to go through it. The first day was classroom instruction where they emphasized how the simulated prison camp was manned by all enlisted volunteers. As officers who were to play the part of captive prisoners, this did not generate a high level of enthusiastic appreciation with us.

That night we were taken across the bay to a drop point on the other side. We were one of the first teams to launch and after exiting the motorboat, we

"At that point, the forest literally lit up with muzzle flashes. It was the scariest thing you ever wanted to see.

We took off running across a body of water, some of it waist deep."

started walking toward the wooded area down a path. We heard a voice holler, "Halt!" so we did the logical thing and started moving 90 degrees away. At that point, the forest literally lit up with muzzle flashes. It was the scariest thing you ever wanted to see. We took off running through a body of water, some of it waist deep, until we got to the other side. We were among the few who actually did escape so, we wandered aimlessly around in the

woods all night. At dawn we found ourselves right back at the same point we had been dropped off. We heard rustling in a bush. Out popped one of my roommates. He had jumped into the bushes when we were dropped off and in sheer terror had stayed there all night. He had bug bites over every inch of his body. I found the place where we had crossed the water the previous night and after seeing it, knew there was no way in the world, in my right mind, that I would have gone into that water. It just shows what a high shot of adrenaline will make you do.

We spent the next two days killing time and dealing with the boredom. I remember finding a can and the natural tea leaves they had told us about, so, with a fire going, I spent a few hours making tea. The more I boiled it the worse it tasted. Eventually, I figured out the brackish water might not have been the best starting point. Fortunately, I didn't have to use any of this training in Vietnam.

Capt R.D. Ramsay
Steger, Ill.

The Unnecessary Salute

My battalion was in Camp Pendleton for our annual training. The troops were billeted away from the officers who were quartered near the horse stables. While there, I saw an old friend, MajGen Arthur B. Hanson, the assistant base commander and a very prominent Washington lawyer, who was doing reserve duty. I asked if he would like to get together for dinner, and he answered affirmatively. Upon arriving at his office, his aide ushered me in where MajGen Hanson greeted me as an old

friend, and we proceeded to catch up over cocktails.

Later he called his driver to take us to the officers' club. We continued reminiscing and enjoying each other's company. When dinner was over, we said our goodbyes and he instructed his driver to take me back to my quarters. The staff car had the red two-star flag on it and a Marine saw this and alerted the officers to fall in and form up. The car stopped and the driver ran around the car to open my door and saluted me. I stepped out, saluted him, saluted my fellow officers who were at attention and told them to carry on. Without exception, all outranked me, and I spent a long time answering their questions while we all had a good laugh.

CWO-4 David L. Horne
USMC (Ret)
West Palm Beach, Fla.

Tightening His Belt

During a tour at HQMC in 1976, I was a gunnery sergeant, and we had a sergeant in our office. He and I decided to see who could lose the most weight in four weeks' time. He won the first week and I paid him \$1. The following three weeks I won.

We wore civvies to work and changed in the back room. Most days after he left, I would snip off about a 1/4- to 1/2-inch off his belt. We all had a hard time to keep from laughing as it was getting harder and harder for him to buckle his belt properly. During this period, I must have cut off 3 to 4 inches and he never caught on. When the bet was over, I confessed and purchased him a new belt.

1stSgt Ron Maxson
USMC (Ret)
Greensburg, Pa.

John Wayne in Vietnam

In 1966, I was wounded in Vietnam while serving with 1/3 outside Da Nang. While I was waiting outside 1st Medical for triage, the one and only John Wayne showed up. He went up and down the line of the wounded and shook everyone's hand and asked our names. He noticed a toe tag on one Marine and knew it indicated that the Marine didn't have long to live. He knelt down beside the young man and asked him what happened. The Marine replied, "I was playing John Wayne, and I screwed up."

When Mr. Wayne's escorts tried to move him along to their next scheduled location, he replied, "I paid my own way here and I'll stay where I want as long as I want!" It wasn't much longer until the young Marine passed, and he left the area.

A few years later, I received a call from an associate of John Wayne inviting me and a few "carefully chosen" friends to be his guests on his yacht which was a converted minesweeper. It would be docking in the San Diego

Harbor that evening. He kept in touch for a while and once I was asked to captain his ship because his regular captain was too drunk.

SgtMaj Troy Hensley
Wingate, Texas

Surprise in Chu Lai

In the spring of 1966, I was a corporal stationed with the Weather Service at the airstrip on the beach at Chu Lai, Vietnam. It was mid-morning, and the

"Just then a helicopter swooped in and set down. The crew chief leaped out and came running toward the weather station yelling my name."

temperature was already 100 degrees and climbing. We had just been notified that a scheduled weather briefing for three lieutenants was canceled.

As I looked out the door of the weather van at the beehive of activity on the

airstrip, two ordnance teams were hand loading Skyhawks with Snake-eye bombs. Two other Skyhawk engines were screaming at maximum output as mechanics pulled maintenance. Three forklifts were unloading cargo from a C-130 Hercules at such a rapid rate it looked dangerous.

Just then a helicopter swooped in and set down. The crew chief leaped out and came running toward the weather station yelling my name and shouting that I was wanted at the helo, now! As I jogged toward the helo, a Playboy Bunny hopped out in full bunny costume and came running. She jumped into my arms pummeling me with kisses and leaving lipstick marks all over my face.

As we chatted, I realized it had gotten very quiet. I looked around and the ordnance crews had stopped working, the screaming Skyhawk engines were shut down, the three forklifts had stopped, and all eyes were on the Playboy Bunny. Suddenly the crew chief yelled that it was time to go. I helped the Bunny back

onto the helo, and as I did, another Bunny leaned out and planted a big kiss on my mouth. I backpedaled as the helo took off as fast as it had arrived. After they left, three lieutenants interrogated me with who, what, why and how all at the same time.

My buddy tells me, on those rare occasions when dark thoughts of Vietnam creep into his mind, he switches his thoughts to the day his Playboy Bunny sister shut down all activity at the SATS airstrip in Chu Lai and smiles.

Capt Del Duvall
Colorado Springs, Colo.

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



CAPT DEL DUVALL - USMC

This photo was taken for the Weather Service Christmas card in November 1966. Standing, left to right: Sgt L.D. Duvall, LCpl F.J. Yensel, Cpl J.S. Schoonover, GySgt P.S. Cox, Sgt G.K. Phelps, 2ndLt R.E. Katz, 2ndLt D.A. Innis, Cpl P.S. Rosenbloom, LCpl M.P. Bruno, Cpl H.P. Chaundy, Sgt R.L. Mussleman and WO R.G. Deuto. Seated, left to right: SSgt J.P. Yost, SSgt G.J. Maunly, Cpl N.C. McLain, Cpl H.H. Hoffman, Cpl J.P. Daptula and Cpl D.G. Reyckert.

From the *Leatherneck Archives*: April 1991

The Storm is Over

By R.R. Keene

It was all but over in 100 hours. Saddam Hussein in his bunker still babbled something about his army's might, but few were listening. America and its allies had decapitated him from his army so quickly that the head in Baghdad didn't want to realize it had been severed.

Heaps of Iraqi corpses were being interred in mass graves—estimates of Iraqi casualties range from 85,000 to 100,000—throughout the desert littered with 3,700 of their tanks, 1,875 armored vehicles, and 2,140 artillery pieces burned or abandoned. Groups of Iraq's best roamed the desert, dazed, hungry, thirsty, humble and pathetic, looking for someone, anyone to surrender to. Allied estimates say that as many as 150,000 prisoners nearly overwhelmed Allied holding areas and flooded military medical facilities to have their wounds treated. Still others, who deserted their officers who had failed them, headed north to home, having had enough of Saddam's military adventures.

They had fought eight years of war with Iran and gained nothing. They had faced the Americans and their allies and, under six weeks of constant air bombardment (approximately 102,000 allied sorties), capped by four days of lightning-quick war, lost everything, including their pride and honor.

The military architect of what has a high

probability of becoming one of the most studied battle of modern times was Army General H. Norman Schwarzkopf. The plan called for feints, envelopments, bold tactics, deception and modern equipment operated by professional, thinking warriors. In the Persian Gulf, GEN Schwarzkopf modified the plan to call for shock troops to charge head-on into the maw of heavily fortified enemy defenses, while his heavy armor made a "Hail Mary" sweep around. It called for Marines.

In what newsmen have facetiously called the "mother of all briefings," given by GEN Schwarzkopf in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on Feb. 27, the commander of Operation Desert Storm forces praised all of his units, but particularly the Marines, who, in a matter of hours, not only breached the enemy defenses but also blew halfway through Kuwait in the process.

"I can't say enough about the two Marine divisions," said the general about the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions who worked in tandem for the first time in history. "If I use words like "brilliant," it would really be an under-description of the absolute superb job that they did in breaching the so-called impenetrable barrier. It was a classic, absolutely classic military breaching of a very, very tough minefield, barbed wire, fire trenches-type barrier. They went through the first barrier like it was water. They went across into the second barrier line, even though they

were under artillery fire at the same time. They continued to open up the breach. And then they brought both divisions streaming through that breach. Absolutely superb operation, a textbook, and I think it'll be studied for many, many years to come as the way to do it."

Later, when a reporter asked if the defenses the Marines went through were perhaps overrated in the first place, Schwarzkopf shot back, "Have you ever been in a minefield?" The stunned pundit answered that he had not.

"All there's got to be is one mine, and that's intense," the general scolded. "There were plenty of mines out there, there were plenty of barbed wire, there were fire trenches, most of which we set off ahead of time, but there are still some that are out there ... There were a lot of booby traps ... not a fun place to be. I got to tell you, probably one of the toughest things that anyone ever has to do is go up there and walk into something like that and through it, and consider that while you're going through it and clearing it, at the same time, you are probably under fire by enemy artillery. That's all I can say."

It was enough.

Marines, with Kuwaiti and Saudi forces, had been in their traditional forefront role on Feb. 24 as more than 200,000 allied troops made a blitzkrieg into Iraq and Kuwait after President George H.W. Bush's deadline of high noon passed, having been arrogantly ignored by Saddam Hussein and his followers.

It was another in a series of gross miscalculations by the man who many Marines had dubbed the "Bozo of Baghdad." In this case, it effectively ended any chance of an eleventh-hour settlement and spelled the end of Saddam's prized, fourth-largest army in the world. President Bush said, in effect, that the time for lame speeches was over and that talking from now on would come from the business ends of allied howitzers.

What may have been, according to many military experts, the best planned and most perfectly executed massive assault in history caused detractors of Americans and their allies to retreat to the drawing boards. Analysts say the Soviet military, who heavily equipped, supplied



SGT ROBERT C. JENKS, USMC

This Soviet-made Iraqi tank never had a chance.



SGT EARNIE GRAFTON, USMC

Marines had more firepower than they would need for the invasion of Kuwait, and gun crews had run countless drills prior to breaching Iraqi lines at the Saudi Border.

and trained the Iraqis, will certainly have to rethink their methods and re-examine their weaponry. The doomsayers such as one congressman, who in late February confidently predicted 30,000 to 40,000 allied casualties, have been silenced for now, like Iraqi gun positions along the Saudi border. As with the start of the air war on Jan. 16, it immediately became apparent that the ground assault was nothing short of a total success.

The Marines had made a predawn assault at 4 a.m. on Feb. 24. Lieutenant General Walter Boomer, Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force, said that 30 minutes after the invasion started, Marines had overrun the minefields, barbed wire and other obstacles of Saddam's highly touted "walls of death." In less than six hours, members of the 1st and 2nd Marine Divisions with the Tiger Brigade of the U.S. Army's 2nd Armored Division had cleared eight lanes through the minefields, sliced through the Iraqi defenses and waded through a 35-mile sea of surrendering Iraqi soldiers.

Marine combat correspondent Staff Sergeant Ken Pettigrew was with the assault as the 2ndMarDiv moved, caravan fashion, into Kuwait and reported his experience:

"Moving delicately through the narrow breaching area (wide enough for one vehicle), the sixty-five tracked and wheeled vehicles passed through a mine-

field, well-marked with signs and strands of barbed wire.

"Line charges had been used by engineers to clear the way.

"Ugly plumes of black smoke billowed from burning oil rigs; the flames of these wells were an unpleasant yellow. Acrid and perhaps toxic fumes dirtied noses, choked the lungs and squeezed the temples. The dirty sky looked like someone had put carbon paper over it, giving

were the first prisoners and among them were a general and a colonel.

"The morale of the Marines was high. They wanted to liberate this tiny country and then head back to Camp Lejeune."

It was Teddy Roosevelt's "big stick" policy, updated with high-mobility, air, armor, other modern-day weaponry and tactics up against a mustachioed gangster, pseudo-tactician playing World War I trench warfare in his version of World War II's Maginot Line.

"As far as Saddam Hussein being a great military strategist," sneered Schwarzkopf at his briefing, "he is neither a strategist, nor is he schooled in the operational art, nor is he a tactician, nor is he a general, nor is he a soldier. Other than that, he's a great military man."

Saddam's oath to make the allies swim in their own blood and make the earth burn beneath their feet was only talk. As the ground war started, the bully of Baghdad abandoned the Palestine Liberation Organization and others who had befriended him, as well as his own troops, while his lackeys over the "Mother of Battles" radio reassured Arabs that his army was winning the jihad (holy war).

His forces knew better. They surrendered in waves that almost overwhelmed the allies. In many instances they were gunned down or beheaded by their own officers or execution squads. The military leadership, unable to face the oncoming

"The morale of the Marines was high. They wanted to liberate this tiny country and then head back to Camp Lejeune."

—SSgt Ken Pettigrew

everything a dull, ugly appearance. Low-flying birds skimmed along the road, perhaps attracted by the MRE (meals, ready to eat) trail left behind the convoy.

"The vehicles were 10-200 meters from each other, depending on the terrain and hazards. Just north of the border was a burnt, abandoned commercial vehicle, perhaps a casualty of the country's civilian exodus. Several hundred Iraqi soldiers were spotted walking in formation. They

Moving through the minefields while watching for Iraqi soldiers was the order of the day for many Marines during the initial days of Operation Desert Storm. (Photo by Cpl Kevin Doll, USMC)

onslaught and before fleeing north without their troops, took to torching nearly 600 Kuwaiti oil wells which oil-fire expert Paul Neal “Red” Adair estimated will take more than two years to snuff out. They then set out to rape, pillage, plunder and murder residents of the capital, Kuwait City, before escaping and reportedly hiding behind thousands of Kuwaiti male hostages.

“The mother of battles has turned into one mother of a corner for Saddam Hussein,” said one TV commentator.

Indeed. Allied forces stopped counting Iraqi prisoners when in two days their numbers exceed 26,000, according to Marine Brigadier General Richard I. Neal, Deputy Director of Operations, U.S. Central Command in the Saudi capital of Riyadh. The number was estimated to be more than 35,000 the next day. There were so many that American soldiers joked that Iraqi soldiers needed to take a ticket number to surrender.

“There were a very, very large number of dead in these units, a very large number of dead,” explained Schwarzkopf. “We even found them when we went into the units ourselves and found them in the trenches. There were very heavy desertions. At one point, we had reports of desertion rates of more than 30 percent of the units that were along the front. As you know, we had quite a large number of POWs that came across, and so I think it’s a combination of desertions, people that were killed, people that were captured and some other people who are just flat still running.”

“They look like little ants in a row, coming from a peanut butter and jelly sandwich somebody left on the ground,” said Captain John Sizemore, a pilot who



watched the trail of prisoners from above the desert. Most were conscripts of the Iraqi Popular Army. In one case, Marines came upon a soldier who, dressed in Bermuda shorts and wearing a Chicago Bears T-shirt, said to them in English any American would understand, “Gee, guys, where the hell have you been?” It turned out he’d been an Iraqi student in Chicago who’d gone to Baghdad to visit his grandmother, only to be pressed into the Iraqi army.

A Marine had his high-mobility multipurpose vehicle stuck in the sand and saw an Iraqi tank rolling toward him. Thinking he was going to die, he watched as an enemy tank crewman jumped out, hooked the Humvee to the tank, towed it from the rut and then, with the rest of his crew, politely surrendered to a very relieved young man.

Those few who chose to fight were simply outgunned. Marine M1A1 Abrams and M60 tanks, tracked landing vehicles, light-armored vehicles (LAVs), Humvees mounted with tube launched, optically

tracked, wire command link, guided missiles (TOWs), AH-1W Sea Cobra helicopter gunships, OV-10 Bronco spotter aircraft, AV-8B Harrier, A-6 Intruder and F-18 Hornet attack jets shot across the desert with power and speed that stunned and devastated the Iraqis. Those Iraqis who did fight mounted a battle formation of 80 tanks only to have three-quarters of them pulverized. Cluster bombs blew 50-foot craters, incoming 155 mm and 8-inch artillery shells created a vacuum noise as they fell, sending the crescendo of impact and shock waves across the desert floor. Hellfire missiles slammed home in blinding blasts and sent jagged parts of Soviet-made T-55 and T-62 tanks flying like so many pieces of shrapnel in every direction. Those few Iraqis who didn’t join the ranks of prisoners or run from the battle died.

“If we had another 12 hours of daylight, most of the forces inside Kuwait would have given up,” said another Marine at the end of the first day. One Marine jumped from his truck deep in Kuwait and shouted, laughing, “Oh man, I love this. Isn’t this great? I’m gonna reenlist!”

It did seem too easy. Most found it hard not to share the Marine’s exuberance; however, many cautiously waited for the proverbial “other shoe to fall.” It never did.

The advance through eastern Kuwait was so far ahead of schedule that approximately 18,000 Marines offshore with the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade seemingly had to settle for feints which kept several Iraqi divisions guessing where and when the amphibious assault would come.

GEN Schwarzkopf had never intended for them to land unless required later. “It became very apparent to us early on that



SGT EARNIE GRAFTON, USMC

A Marine waits in his fighting hole for word to move up. Once the word came, the Marines moved so quickly that, in less than 100 hours, the war was over.

the Iraqis were quite concerned about an amphibious operation across the shores to liberate Kuwait, this (pointing) being Kuwait City. They put a very, very heavy barrier of infantry along here (the coast) and they proceeded to build an extensive barrier that went all the way across the border, down and around, and up the side of Kuwait.

“We continued heavy operations out in the sea because we wanted the Iraqis to continue to believe that we were going to conduct a massive amphibious operation in this area. And I think many of you [the media] recall the number of amphibious rehearsals we had, to include ‘Imminent Thunder’ that was written about quite extensively for many reasons.” The U.S. media, some of whom had willingly prostituted themselves as a propaganda vehicle in Baghdad, could hardly cry foul when they found that an American general had led them to believe a landing was inevitable.

“But we continued to have those operations because we wanted him to concentrate his forces, which he did,” said Schwarzkopf

During the assault into Kuwait, several dozen Marine CH-53 and CH-46 helicopters from the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit flew in mock assault formation from their ships in the Gulf, confusing the Iraqis. In reality, there was literally little room for another major force on the battlefield. Between Kuwait and southern Iraq, the total combined forces of the allied coalition had the Iraqi military surrounded

in an open desert the size of Texas.

Schwarzkopf went on. “Very early, [Jan. 16] we took on the Iraqi air force. We knew that [Saddam] had very limited reconnaissance means. And therefore, when we took out his air force, for all intents and purposes, we took out his ability to see what we were doing ... Once we had taken out his eyes, we did what could best be described as the ‘Hail Mary’ play in football ... We did a massive movement of troops all the way out to the west, to the extreme west, because at that time we knew he was still fixed in his area [southern Iraq and Kuwait] with the vast majority of his forces, and once the air campaign started, he would be incapable of moving out to counter this move, even if he knew we made it.”

By the end of the second day the U.S. Army, with French and British troops, had swept far west in an arc that reached its apex less than 150 miles from Baghdad. Kuwait City was abandoned by the Iraqis and left in the hands of the Kuwaiti resistance. South of the city, Marines were fighting an armored battle near the international airport.

It was here that the Iraqis sent 100 tanks including 50 of their top-of-the-line Soviet-made T-72s up against the aging, Marine M60 tanks. The battle lasted all day and into the night and Iraqi tank survivors recalled swearing at their Soviet tank sights which in the dust and heat of battle proved useless. The battleships *Wisconsin* and *Missouri* fired their 16-inch guns, sending 2,000-pound Volkswagen-sized

During the assault into Kuwait, several dozen Marine CH-53 and CH-46 helicopters from the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit flew in mock assault formation from their ships in the Gulf, confusing the Iraqis.

shells into the airport. Hangars, terminals and tanks disintegrated, nearly vaporized. Marine tankers picked off the rest of the tanks whose crews were, according to Marine commanders, “literally jumping out of the tanks.” Marine and Army snipers dropped the rest.

The plain around Kuwait City was a graveyard for Iraqi armor, “a field of burning tanks,” according to LtGen Boomer. Outside an oil field, the men of the 1stMarDiv cut off Iraqis who had just set fire to several wellheads. Against a backdrop of orange fires, black soot, burning vehicles and sand turning to glass, the Iraqis counterattacked. It was, figuratively speaking, a firefight in hell.

“We fired on two gathering points and it wasn’t 30 minutes before we scattered them like rabbits out of the bush,” said Major General J.M. “Mike” Myatt, com-



Amphibious ships such as USS *Nassau* (LHA-4), loaded with Marines, waited offshore. They launched helicopters in assault formations without Marines to fool the Iraqis. The ruse worked.

mander of the 1stMarDiv. “The Cobras and LAVs had a field day.” The “hunter-killer” package of the Marine air/ground team continued to search out and destroy Iraqi equipment before it could be moved out of the area. In other action, a Marine commander reported that when Iraqi forces began attacking his troops, a wave of surrendering Iraqis attempted to surrender ahead of the firing. The Iraqis fired their Soviet-made Frog missiles, which fell short, killing their own troops.

Meanwhile, 10 miles north of the airport at the abandoned American Embassy, a scout force of Marines from 2d Force Reconnaissance Company and Army Special Forces soldiers entered the compound. One, who refused to be identified, did what American fighting men have traditionally loved to do and raised the flag of his country on a makeshift staff. This particular flag was given to him by a dying Marine during the Vietnam Tet Offensive 23 years ago. In its own way, it symbolically signaled the end of an era of recovery from Vietnam for the U.S. military and marked the successful coining of age for the professional, all-volunteer force. A few yards away, apparently unnoticed, the American flag left by U.S. Ambassador Nathaniel Howell, who stubbornly held out in the compound for more than four months before leaving in December, still flew over it all and would be there when Edward “Skip” Gnehm,

“The Cobras and LAVs had a field day.” The “hunter-killer” package of the Marine air/ground team continued to search out and destroy Iraqi equipment before it could be moved out of the area.

— MajGen J. M. “Mike” Myatt, commander of the 1stMarDiv

America’s new ambassador to a liberated Kuwait, arrived Feb. 28.

On Feb. 27, Marine forces surrounded Kuwait City. They paused to allow the Arab forces, led by the Kuwaitis, the honor of liberating their city. The initial success had been nothing less than astounding. Not a single tank or armored vehicle had been lost. However, in the 72 hours since taking the offensive, five Marines had been killed and 48 wounded.

It is no secret that the allies expected their losses to be higher. With Iraqi air virtually eliminated at the start of the air war, the Iraqi Army was pounded mer-

cilessly for weeks, supplies were destroyed and, most importantly, Iraq’s command and control communications were severely degraded. Blind, without spotter ability, unable to come into the open and unable to regroup, the Iraqi army was starved by lack of food, water, fuel, supplies, intelligence and information. Eight years of war with Iran had tired them more than it had hardened them. Their rigid command structure turned out to be their glass jaw for it only allowed its soldiers to follow obediently.

“You can have the best equipment in the world, you can have the largest numbers in the world,” said Schwarzkopf, “but if you’re not dedicated to your cause, if you don’t have the will to fight, then you are not going to have a very good army Many people were deserting, and I think you’ve heard this, that the Iraqis brought down execution squads whose job was to shoot people.

“I’ve got to tell you what: The soldier doesn’t fight very hard for a leader who is going to shoot him on his own whim. That’s not what military leadership is all about. I attribute a great deal of failure of the Iraqi army to fight to their own leadership. They committed them to a cause that they didn’t believe in. They were all saying that they didn’t want to be there. They didn’t want to fight their fellow Arab. They were lied to. They were deceived. Then after they got there [Kuwait], they had



CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters waited in the desert for a mission. The war went so quickly and so well that herding Iraqi prisoners took up more flight time than assault and resupply missions.



SSGT KEN PETTIGREW, USMC

A seemingly endless line of Iraqi prisoners was escorted to the rear.

leadership that were so uncaring for them that they didn't properly feed them, give them water and, in the end, they kept them there only at the point of a gun."

The only individual initiative most of its men demonstrated was that which prompted them to surrender. Only Saddam's Republican Guard made any attempt to stand, and the all-powerful armor of the United States Army, with its French and British counterparts, had thundered across southern Iraq, sealing them off. They rolled so fast that it helped ensure that Saddam's promise to use chemical weapons remained as empty as his capacity for statesmanship. The American Army and its allies, itching for battle with Iraq's best, proved what GEN Schwarzkopf had thought all along and caused the American press to stop using the word "elite" synonymously with the Republican Guard.

"The Republican Guard are the ones that went into Kuwait in the first place," emphasized the general. "They get paid more. They get treated better. They also were well to the rear here so they could be the first ones to 'bug out' when the battlefield started folding, while these poor fellows [Iraqi popular forces] up here, who didn't want to be here in the first place, bore the brunt of the attack. Well, that didn't happen."

Periodically through it all, Saddam, well to the rear and in a near nuclear-proof bunker, continued to haggle for terms of a cease-fire as if in some Baghdad bazaar. However, he never really settled on a price and never stopped trying to flesh out any minuscule crumb of concession by which he could save face. It all fell on allied ears deafened by his previous lies and rhetoric.

His words could not be heard in Kuwait City where Arab forces and a jubilant population exploded in delirious joy that marked the end of seven brutal months of Iraqi occupation. Kuwaitis gleefully

paraded a jackass saying, "This is Saddam Hussein! This is Saddam Hussein!"

Kuwaiti soldiers, choked with emotion, sang their national anthem as they raised the green, white, red and black colors of their country. "Thank you! Thank you!" they screamed, waving almost as many red, white and blue American flags when Marines later entered the city.

A reunion took place between a Kuwaiti resistance fighter and his brother, a U.S. Marine who joined when Iraq invaded, when he arrived in his hometown as part of the lead Marine units.

LtGen Boomer, riding atop a vehicle, said, "It was a once in a lifetime experience. There are some things worth fighting for. When you see them regain their freedom and their joy at seeing them [the Iraqis] leave, it is quite a feeling. I'm glad we could be part of returning it to them."

But there were also persistent rumors of atrocities and war crimes by the Iraqis who, many claimed, shot, tortured and raped their victims. Though some stories were later discounted, there was evidence of enough brutality to anger and dampen the spirits of victorious Kuwaitis, their Arab allies and other coalition forces. Reports of atrocities in the later stages of the war were, in part, reasons for GEN Schwarzkopf's eagerness to see the Marines in Kuwait City.

"We've heard they took up to 40,000 [Kuwaiti hostages, but estimates have since downgraded the number to nearly 20,000]," he explained, "but that pales to insignificance compared to the absolutely unspeakable atrocities that occurred in Kuwait in the last week. They are not part of the same human race, the people that did that, the rest of us are. I've got to pray that's the case."

In Riyadh, BGen Neal reported that intelligence sources and the Kuwaiti resistance had provided the coalition

with lists of about 40,000 Iraqis wanted for questioning. On that list, 25,000 are alleged to have committed atrocities before the ground campaign began, and 15,000 are wanted for crimes committed in the last days before the cease-fire. Allied commanders have ordered that surrendering units be screened for those who may have committed crimes.

The clearing of pockets of resistance, restoration of order and mopping up kept Marines busy as the war wound down. While allies talked of the problems of winning and keeping a responsible peace, Marines and other Americans started thinking of home. Indications are that, for the most part, units who arrived first will return first.

While it was high technology and sophisticated equipment that played a big part in this war, it still came down to individuals, skilled and trained in the professional military arts, to make it all work successfully.

GEN Schwarzkopf explained, "It is not a Nintendo game. It is a tough battlefield where people are risking their lives at all times ... and we ought to be very, very proud of them."

"I would tell you that casualties of that order of magnitude ... is almost miraculous as far as the light number of casualties. It will never be miraculous for the families of those people, but it is miraculous."

And finally, the general credited his boss for providing the military with its most important weapon: trust and confidence. "I'm very thankful for the fact that the President of the United States has allowed the United States military and the coalition military to fight this war exactly as it should have been fought. And the President in every case has taken our guidance and our recommendations to heart and has acted superbly as the Commander in Chief of the United States." 🇺🇸

Leatherneck Laffs



"I liked it better when we intervened in warm-weather countries."



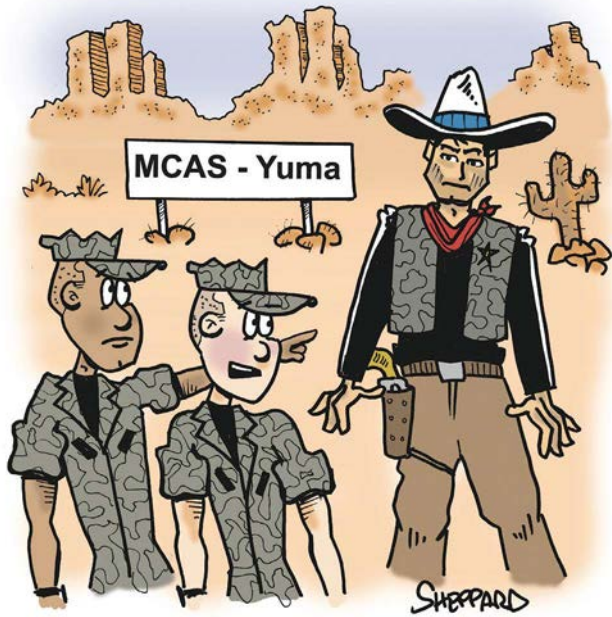
"Clothing allowance? Oh, you mean beer money."



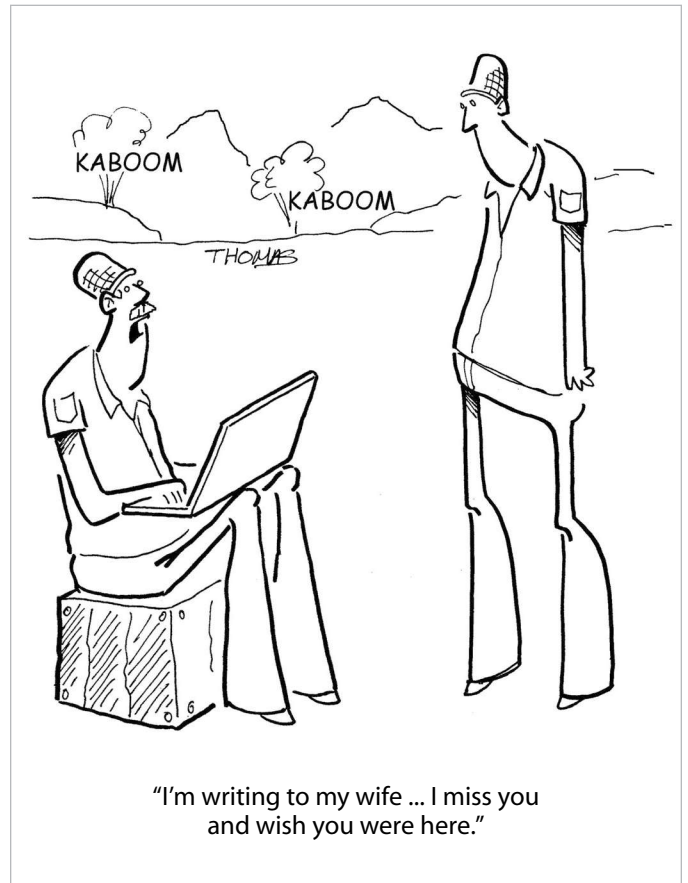
"No, Sir, using Zoom will not make battles go faster."



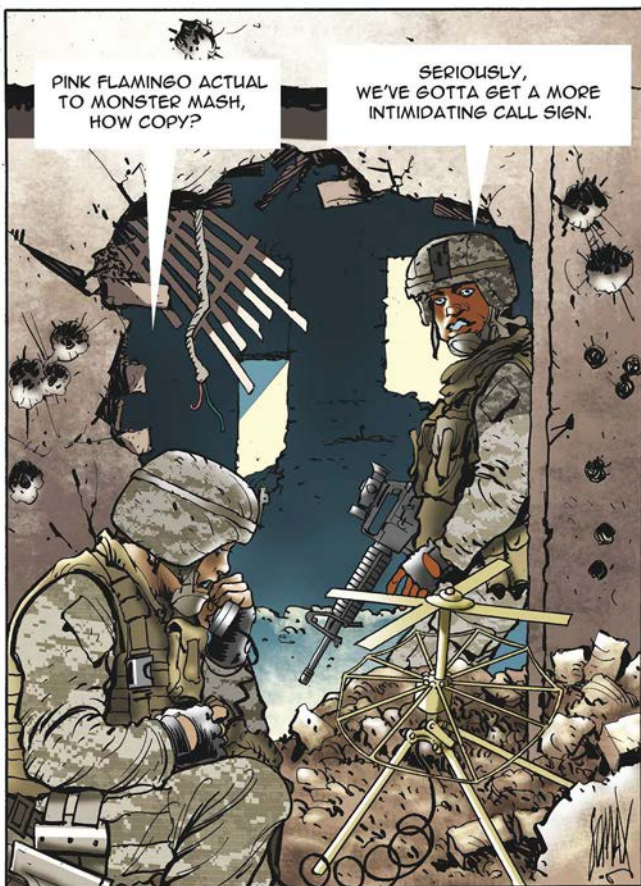
"Do you have an all-inclusive on the shores of Tripoli?"



"Uh, oh. Here comes NCIS."



"I'm writing to my wife ... I miss you and wish you were here."



"Hold your fire!"

May 1975— Three Bugle Calls

By Col Robert Newlin, USMC (Ret)

Liberty Call sounded around 5 p.m. on May 13, 1975. The duty NCO was posted in the battery office, and the fire watch was set in the Quonset-hut billets. Most Marines were at the mess hall or their clubs on the camp. A few Marines were ashore at their favorite watering holes on BC or Gate Two Streets. No one, from the battery commander to the junior cannoneer, had an inkling that before “Taps” was sounded, they would have answered To Arms to join 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment in the expedition to recover SS *Mayaguez* and her crew. No one knew that when reveille was next sounded at Camp Hauge, the Okinawa home of the 12th Marine Regiment, 107 Marines and two hospital corpsmen would be airborne on their way to participate in the final chapter of the American war in Southeast Asia.

Let’s take a step back and consider the operational situation in the 3rd Marine Division in the mid-1970s. The rhythm of the Division in those years revolved around its six infantry battalions and their traditional supporting elements—artillery batteries, engineer platoons, recon platoons, etc. These were the years before the Unit Deployment Program and all Division Marines came on individual orders for unaccompanied tours of a year. It was a cycle of man and train the battalion teams, deploy them, break them down through end-of-tour rotations and start over. The 4th Marine Regiment battalions deployed on amphibious shipping and made the U.S. Naval Base at Subic Bay in the Philippines their operational and training hub. There, they trained in jungle warfare, small-unit tactics, etc. The supporting units would do MOS-specific training. For example, artillery batteries and battalion mortars would conduct

firing exercises at the Zambales Range. Amphibious operations and training with Philippine Marines would be conducted when possible. The battalions of 9th Marines deployed to Camp Fuji on Honshu, in the Japanese Home Islands, where they trained in the conditions and ranges available there.

Battery I, 3rd Bn, 12th Marines mirrored the formation and training cycle of 3/4. Most of the battery’s Marines joined in the spring of 1974 around a nucleus “salts,” who had extended their unaccompanied tours to deploy again with BLT 3/4. The battery trained through the spring and summer, deployed in the fall, and returned to Camp Hauge in December 1974.

After their deployments, battalions were still at a high state of training and cohesion and were designated as the air-contingency BLT for the Division. I/3/12 was assigned to 3/4 for its stint as the Air Contingency Battalion Landing Team (ACBLT). In early February, the battery participated in U.S. Air Force training on the preparation and aircraft loading procedures for howitzers and prime movers.

While all this activity was swirling at the tactical level, other forces were stirring in Southeast Asia. Even the most casual observer could see that the communist wave was about to overwhelm Cambodia and the Republic of Vietnam.



The acting chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen David C. Jones, USAF, standing, briefs the National Security Council on possible military options during the second meeting on the *Mayaguez* crisis on May 14, 1975.

At the operational level, Marine leaders recognized the imperative to be prepared to execute any number of contingency operations in the region. Their planning revealed the requirement to reduce the airlift footprint of contingency forces that might be needed to evacuate American citizens from the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh or the RVN capital of Saigon.

The 12th Marines' contribution to this lift-footprint reduction was to resurrect from deep storage five 107 mm mortars, commonly called "four-deuces" because their bore is 4.2 inches. (In the Vietnam years, each direct support artillery battalion had a battery of "four-deuces" which gave them a modest "general support" capability for their supported infantry regiment.) The mortars would be rotated through the 12th Marines' six 105 mm batteries for training with the expectation that there would always be at least one trained battery on Okinawa. Battery I conducted intensive training on the mortars, culminating in a field firing exercise on Feb. 12-13.

This additional capability significantly lowered the lift requirement for an artillery battery. The "four-deuces" weighed only 672 pounds compared to 4,980 pounds for a 105 mm howitzer. Furthermore, the

mortar could be broken down to its major components and Marine-transported in a pinch. Ideally, it would be transported in a significantly lighter and smaller vehicle than the 2.5-ton truck required to tow a howitzer.

**That calm was shattered on
May 12, 1975, when a gunboat of
the new government in Kampuchea
(formally Cambodia) seized an
American ship, SS *Mayaguez*,
in the Gulf of Thailand.**

The predicted advance of communist forces in Cambodia and Vietnam began in earnest in late winter and early spring of 1975. Btry I, by virtue of its air contingency training and 107 mm mortar qualification, was ideally prepared to support any requirement; however, the battery was not called to participate in the evacuations of first Phnom Penh and then Saigon and settled into normal training and garrison duties.

A calm surely settled over official Washington after the apparent last chapter

of United States involvement in South Asia was written with the fall of Saigon. Just as surely, that calm was shattered on May 12, 1975, when a gunboat of the new government in Kampuchea (formally Cambodia) seized an American ship, SS *Mayaguez*, in the Gulf of Thailand. Leaders from the President down to the commanding officer of 3/12 discussed options for how to respond to this blatant violation of the Law of the Sea.

On May 12 and 13, the Marines of Btry I were oblivious to all the planning discussions between Washington and high-level headquarters on Oahu and on Okinawa. The battery went about its daily routines of maintenance and training, and at about 5 p.m. on May 13, sounded Liberty Call.

To Arms

The churn that had been running between Okinawa, Oahu and Washington finally fell on the shoulders of the commanding officer of Btry I that evening. At 9:30 p.m., the commanding officer of 3/12 called the battery commander to his office at the battalion headquarters and ordered the battery to mount out. The battery was assigned to BLT 2/9, which had been given the mission of recovering SS *Mayaguez* and her crew. Orders were issued to recall the battery, draw weapons, motor transport and personal gear. The battery was equipped with the five 107



Aerial surveillances showed two Khmer Rouge gunboats during the initial seizing of SS *Mayaguez* on May 15, 1975.



A Marine from Battery I, 3d Bn, 12th Marines braces for the inevitable "whoomp" from the 4.2-inch mortar in 1975. The mortar was more easily transported than a howitzer.



Aerial surveillance photos showing both East and West Beaches on Koh Tang, May 14, 1975.

The battery left Kadena Air Base at 6 a.m. on May 14 and arrived at Utapao Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, at 11:15 a.m. the same day. Utapao is approximately 200 miles from the suspected location of the ship and her crew. The battery staged in a hangar. The concept of operations called for only the battery liaison officer and his party to participate in the assault. The battery would be called as the tactical situation required. Once the assault got underway, the battery was tasked to provide an officer who could serve as a naval gunfire spotter. The officer was assigned, and the team was completed with radio operators and equipment from H&S Company, 2/9. No further requirements were placed on the battery.

Call to Quarters

Meanwhile, at the national level, the Thai government objected through diplomatic channels the use of its sovereign territory by forces of the United States for military operations against its neighbor. Once the crew and ship had been recovered, orders were issued to the Marines still at Utapao to prepare for departure. The battery commander received the re-embarkation warning order at 9 p.m. on May 15. The personnel, less drivers for the Gamma Goats and MRC-109s and a security detail for the crew-served weapons, departed at 10:50 p.m. on May 15. This echelon returned to Kadena AB at 6:10 a.m. on May 16 and arrived at Camp Hauge at 6:55 a.m. on May 16.

Although the battery did not participate in combat operations, except for the artillery liaison officer and the naval gunfire spotter, the conduct of the Marines and Sailors in the brief hours before departure was the epitome of combat readiness. Participants in the expedition to recover SS *Mayaguez* were authorized to wear the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal and the Navy Unit Commendation ribbon.

The conduct of two Marines of the battery is worthy of additional commentary—especially since neither returned to Camp Hauge in a Marine uniform. First Lieutenant Michael S. Eustis was one of the augmentees from M/3/12. He was an experienced, level-headed officer and was assigned as the artillery liaison officer to BLT 2/9. He was in the assault with the BLT command group. His helicopter was hit by a heavy volume of enemy fire and crashed into the shallow water just off the



Battalion Landing Team 2/9 command group disembarks from Jolly Green 43 on the west coast of Koh Tang, May 15, 1975.

mm mortars that were circulating around the 12th Marines, six M-561 trucks, commonly called “Gamma Goats,” five for the mortars and their sections, and one for crew-served weapons, along with two MRC-109 communications vehicles, commonly called a radio with a Jeep attached. Marines from Btry M, 3/12 and Headquarters Battery, 3/12 would fill gaps in Battery I’s strength due to rotations. These Marines had been earmarked during the days of increased readiness, anticipating the Southeast Asia contingencies. At deployment, 18 Marines from “Mike” Btry and five Marines from

Headquarters Btry would be assigned for the mission. In the meantime, the battery commander consulted with the regimental S-3 for a refresher in the fire direction procedures for firing artillery from an unknown location and a blank firing chart, since it was unlikely that there would be suitable maps of the operating area.

At approximately 12:30 a.m. on May 14, the Marines formed for inspection, and the equipment was inventoried. The battery had made all preparations for combat operations in less than three hours and departed Camp Hauge at 1:20 a.m. on May 14, 1975.

beach. As the burning wreckage lay in the water, 1stLt Eustis began evacuating the trapped team from the aircraft until it exploded and threw him into the water. Recovering quickly, he noticed the severely wounded pilot struggling to escape the still-burning helicopter. Although wounded himself, Eustis came to the pilot's aid and pulled him away from the burning wreckage and the ground fire coming from the island. Sensing the danger of their position under the intense enemy fire and with only two life preservers available for the nine survivors, he made a float with his trousers and assisted others in doing the same. This allowed the party to clear the danger zone and kept them afloat for three and a half hours until their rescue. By his daring actions, resolute determination and inspiring leadership, Eustis instilled the will to survive in the others. He was awarded the Silver Star for his heroism. He and the others were picked up by a U.S. Navy ship participating in the operation. Once aboard, he was given a set of U.S. Navy officer's khakis, which he wore until he returned to Camp Hauge.

The assistant executive officer of the battery was 1stLt Donald L. Bailey. He

was a resourceful officer who was irrepressibly optimistic. When the battery was ordered to redeploy to Okinawa, 1stLt Bailey was charged by his battery commander to remain with the motor transport, mortars, other crew-served weapons

Although wounded himself, Eustis came to the pilot's aid and pulled him away from the burning wreckage and the ground fire coming from the island.

and the comm gear to await aircraft to redeploy equipment. He was left with a detachment of about a dozen Marines to serve as drivers and security for the equipment. The Thai government continued to pressure the U.S. government to clear their base of all Marines. 1stLt Bailey resisted the pressure from Air Force officials because he had been ordered by his battery commander to look after the battery's equipment. After the redeployment of all the remaining Marines and Sailors of 2/9, only 1stLt Bailey and

his detachment were left. The Thais declared that they would conduct an inspection of the recently vacated area for any remaining Marines, and 1stLt Bailey realized that he was cornered. He ordered all his drivers and security detail to board a departing aircraft while he remained. As imaginative as always, he convinced a U.S. Air Force first lieutenant to give him an Air Force uniform so that he would not stand out for the Thai inspection party. The ruse worked. He secured the battery equipment, personally drove the vehicles aboard the aircraft and returned to Camp Hauge wearing the U.S. Air Force uniform.

Author's bio: Col Robert Newlin was the commanding officer of I/3/12 during the described incident and later commanded 1st Battalion, 12th Marines. He went on to serve 30 years finishing his career in 1997—as it began, in a Marine division in WestPac—as chief of staff of the 3rdMarDiv. His personal papers, which were the basis for this account, have been deposited in the archives branch of the Marine Corps History Division at Marine Corps Base Quantico.



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COURTESY OF JOHN O'MALLEY

Despite Canceled Parade, Marines Continue Veterans Day Tradition

Due to the patriotic actions of members of the Krulak Marine Alliance of Alabama, which provides aid to Marines and their family members in need, the National Birmingham Veterans Day Parade was held on Nov. 11, 2020, preserving its record of unbroken consecutive years. Though the 73rd annual parade was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, local Marines took it upon themselves to save the day by adapting, improvising and

overcoming to continue the tradition, which began in 1947, by fielding a one-float parade over the intended 2020 parade route. The Marine float was greeted with enthusiastic cheers, waving, honking vehicles and salutes as it traveled through the route. Got a problem? Tell it to the Marines!

John O'Malley

Ocean City, Md.

Charity Bike Ride Draws Financial Support For Semper Fi Fund

On Dec. 7, 2020, the Marine Corps League First State Detachment 689 made a formal presentation of \$10,000 to the Semper Fi & America's Fund at an Ocean City, Md., mayor and council meeting. Funds were raised during the first annual Semper Fi Bike Ride held on the Ocean City boardwalk on Oct. 18. SSgt Ramirez and Sgt Enright, active-duty Marines from Marine Corps Recruiting Sub-Station Salisbury, Md., were on hand to receive the funds on behalf of the Semper Fi & America's Fund. Members of the detachment and event producers Brad Hoffman and Bob Broderick, along with members of the local news media, were in attendance to show their appreciation. Hoffman and Broderick presented a framed certificate to Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan and the city council for their support of the first-year event.

The presentation included a video overview of the Semper Fi Bike Ride and a briefing for the council on plans for this year's event, tentatively scheduled for Oct. 17. Bags with event memorabilia were distributed to local officials in attendance. The detachment is



COURTESY OF BOB BRODERICK

looking forward to the next Semper Fi Bike Ride and its continued partnership with the Semper Fi & America's Fund and the town of Ocean City, Md.

First State Marines are proud of the success from their first Semper Fi Bike Ride knowing that the funds raised will continue the mission of the Semper Fi & America's Fund, founded by a group of Marine spouses at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., in 2003, to support wounded, ill and injured servicemembers, veterans and their families.

Bob Broderick



Dayton, Tenn.

Marine Veteran, Granddaughter Complete Virtual MCM

The iconic Marine Corps Marathon didn't take place in Washington, D.C., in 2020, but that didn't keep runners across America, like Marine veteran and *Leatherneck* reader Edward Layne, pictured on the left, and his granddaughter, Kierstynn Conley, right, from running the race. They completed the virtual Marine Corps Marathon together near his home in Dayton, Tenn., Oct. 31, 2020. Layne's goal was to finish in under five hours, which he achieved with a finish time of 4:58:13. He is also the proud grandfather of an active-duty Marine, Corporal Tyler Conley, who is currently stationed in Okinawa, Japan.

Many of the races in the Marine Corps Marathon series were conducted virtually in 2020 and the Marathon hopes to continue to offer the option of virtual participation in the future.

Submitted by Kierstynn Conley

COURTESY OF KIERSTYNN CONLEY

Glastonbury, Conn.



Backpacks for Life Project Meets Immediate Needs of Homeless, At-Risk Veterans

Members of Marine Corps League Peter P. Monaco Jr. Detachment 40, with the support of the generous local community of Glastonbury, Conn., collected bags of daily essential items as part of the Backpacks for Life Project, Nov. 21, 2020. After collecting the items, the league members spent the day sorting and packing the items for distribution on Dec. 5.

The Backpacks for Life project, founded by Marine veteran Brett D'Allesandro in 2014, provides military-grade backpacks filled with personal needs items for at-risk and homeless veterans.

More than 2,000 items were collected, sorted and broken down into three main kits with one extra kit for female veterans. The kit items were then put into gallon-size storage bags that were added


to each of the 50 backpacks they assembled.

"Military veterans have all learned to survive for months with just a backpack, and this project provides the basic essentials as well as resource material for our fellow veterans who are most in need in Connecticut," said retired Marine Sergeant Major Jamie DePaola, "After challenging deployments, when a military member returns home, they often face the hardest part of the process—reintegrating into their civilian lives while battling the hidden wounds of war."

For more information about the Backpacks for Life project, visit www.backpacksforlife.org.

Submitted by SgtMaj Jamie DePaola, USMC (Ret)

COURTESY OF SGTMAJ JAMIE DEPAOLA, USMC (RET)

"Corps Connections" highlights the places and events through which active-duty and veteran Marines connect with one another, honor the traditions of the Corps and recognize the achievements of their fellow leathernecks. We welcome submissions of photos from events like the ones featured here. Send them to: Sara W. Bock, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to s.bock@mca-marines.org. Submission does not guarantee publication, and we cannot guarantee the return of photos. 



“SURVIVORS HELPING SURVIVORS HEAL”

TAPS Provides Peer Support, Resources And Comfort in Tragedy

Part One

This is the first in a two-part series that covers the work of Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) in caring for those grieving the loss of a military loved one. Part two will appear in the March issue of Leatherneck.

By Sara W. Bock

In the months following the death of her husband, Marine Corps Major and AH-1 Cobra pilot John Ruocco in 2005, Kim Ruocco contacted numerous organizations looking for help and emotional support as she and her two young sons struggled to make sense of their devastating loss. But to her dismay, she repeatedly was denied

services when she told them the cause of John’s death: suicide.

These experiences of rejection made an already terrible situation even more unbearable.

Before Ruocco could even begin to truly grieve her husband’s death, she needed answers to the questions that kept her awake at night: “How could this happen?” “Why did this happen?” “How can I get my kids through this?” Her world had been turned upside down, and in the immediate aftermath of John’s death she had received some well-intentioned but terribly misguided “advice” about suicide loss that did more harm than good and left her feeling unable to move forward.

But late one night, as she was looking through the books and resources that had been given to

Top: Survivors of fallen military servicemembers display photos of their loved ones on stage during the annual TAPS Honor Guard Gala, held at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., April 12, 2017. (Photo by Cliff Owen)

Since 1994 the organization has provided a national network of comfort and resources, including a 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline, to all those grieving the death of a military loved one.

her by a Marine Corps casualty assistance calls officer (CACO), Ruocco found a pamphlet from Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS). On the front, the CACO had written, “Call them, they’ll help you.”

It was after midnight, but Ruocco picked up the phone and dialed the number on the pamphlet, planning to leave a message. She was so startled to hear an actual person on the other end of the line that she nearly hung up. The voice belonged to Bonnie Carroll, the president and founder of TAPS, herself the surviving spouse of a fallen servicemember. And rather than turn Ruocco away after hearing her family’s story, Carroll welcomed her to the TAPS family with open arms. She encouraged her to attend the organization’s annual National Military Survivor Seminar in Washington, D.C., held over Memorial Day weekend, so that Ruocco could attend sessions alongside other survivors, and her sons could participate in the TAPS “Good Grief” camp, where they would be paired with military mentors.

According to Carroll, who retired as a major from the Air Force Reserve and was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015 for her work with TAPS, since 1994 the organization has provided a national network of comfort and resources, including a 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline, to all those grieving the death of a military loved one, regardless of their relationship to the deceased or the circumstances of their death. It’s that kind of inclusivity—and a focus on “survivors helping survivors heal”—that attracted more than 19,000 individuals to attend the organization’s programs and events in 2019.

For Ruocco’s sons, who first attended the Good Grief camp in 2006, being paired with military servicemembers who volunteer as TAPS mentors turned out to be what Ruocco calls a “divine intervention,” particularly because one of the boys was arbitrarily assigned to a Marine who knew John and had flown multiple missions with him in Iraq.

“He was able to tell my boys all about their dad in combat and who he was as a Marine,” said Ruocco, who added that her now-grown sons kept in contact with their mentors year after year and would call them after their football and hockey games and other important life events. “These guys showed up at their high school graduations and their college graduations,” she said of the mentors.

As beneficial as that first year was for her boys, Ruocco found herself feeling “completely lost” as



COURTESY OF KIM RUOCCO

Left: Maj John Ruocco, who died in 2005, is pictured here during his 2004 deployment to Iraq. His widow, Kim, now serves as TAPS’ VP for Suicide Prevention and Postvention.



COURTESY OF TAPS

Above: A Marine renders a salute as the casket of SSgt Benjamin Hines is loaded onto a caisson prior to his burial at Arlington National Cemetery, May 5, 2019. Hines was one of three Marines killed in a car bombing in Afghanistan in April 2019.



COURTESY OF TAPS

Left: President Barack Obama presents TAPS Founder and President Bonnie Carroll with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015.

“Every time there’s a suicide, those who are exposed to it are at increased risk for suicide, addiction, reclusiveness and other mental health disorders.”

—Kim Ruocco

the only suicide loss survivor at the seminar. At the time, TAPS didn’t have any suicide-specific programming. The things she was struggling with, she said, were very different from what those around her were dealing with, and she had trouble relating to those whose loved ones were killed in combat or died from illnesses or training accidents.

Rather than walk away, Ruocco, a social worker by trade, shared her thoughts with Carroll and said she wished TAPS could develop some resources specific to suicide loss survivors.

“Well, let’s build it,” she remembers Carroll telling her. And that’s exactly what they did.

Now the TAPS Vice President for Suicide Prevention and Postvention, Ruocco has taken her grief—and the findings from her personal quest to better understand why suicide is so prevalent among military servicemembers—and channeled it into an opportunity to help others who find themselves in the unimaginable position she was once in. According to Ruocco, TAPS now has approximately 16,000 suicide survivors in its database with more added each day. In recent years, she said, suicide is the leading cause of death among those whose survivors are referred to the organization. In response to an ever-growing need, TAPS developed a best practice “postvention” model to help stabilize survivors after a suicide and provide a pathway for post-traumatic growth. That same model has now been implemented by the Department of Defense in its suicide postvention toolkit that’s distributed across all branches of military service.



COURTESY OF TAPS

“Every time there’s a suicide, those who are exposed to it are at increased risk for suicide, addiction, reclusiveness and other mental health disorders,” said Ruocco, referring not only to family members of the deceased servicemember but also their friends and others assigned to their unit. “It’s really important to check in with those people who were exposed and make sure they’re not at risk for suicide themselves and that their mental health has not become unstable because of this exposure.”

Ruocco describes the postvention model as a guide for properly treating the associated trauma and addressing issues specifically related to suicide loss, such as an understanding of why people die by suicide. After having personally witnessed the way her husband’s death affected his fellow Marines, she recognizes firsthand the importance of making sure all who are affected are given the proper tools to process the loss.

“If you don’t help process that stuff, that Marine can go on through their career and feel responsible for that death for the rest of their lives, so you’ve got

Above: Marines prepare to fold a flag during the burial ceremony for Pvt Edwin Benson at Arlington National Cemetery, Nov. 19, 2019. From the initial notification of death to the months and years that follow, TAPS embraces all those grieving the death of a military loved one.



COURTESY OF TAPS

Left: A military mentor interacts with children attending TAPS’ Good Grief Camp in Arlington, Va., in 2013.



COURTESY OF TAPS

A TAPS mentor helps a young child display his artwork during a TAPS Good Grief Camp in Arlington, Va.

to get in there, you've got to process and educate and stabilize so they move forward in a healthy way," said Ruocco.

By helping survivors process and grieve a suicide loss, Ruocco says they can move on to the final phase of the model, post-traumatic growth, and find meaning in their loss—whether that's through organizing memorial runs, committing to live life in a more intentional and connected way, or making efforts to prevent other deaths by suicide.

"We teach people to acknowledge grief as love for that person. To embrace it, feel it, release it," said Ruocco. "Understanding that grief is something that you need to feel and need to process."

Through her work with TAPS, Ruocco has been given a platform to share her husband's story, and hopes that in doing so, deaths by suicide will be prevented and families like hers who are grieving the loss of a loved one by suicide will know they are not alone.

"I was so afraid that John's death would be what defined him, and he was so worried that his struggles with mental health would be what defined him," said Ruocco. "I was determined to make his story not end there."

After graduating at the top of his class in flight school, Cobra pilot John Ruocco flew 75 combat missions in Iraq and was by all accounts a selfless individual and a natural leader.

"People were drawn to him because he was funny and kind and the kind of guy that would drop everything for anybody at any time, even if he had so much on his plate," said Ruocco, who pinpoints a series of stressful events during her husband's time in the Marine Corps that she believes led to his death and talks candidly about what she believes was a pervasive stigma associated with getting help for mental health issues.

From the loss of their first child during pregnancy to a series of aviation mishaps at Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., that claimed the lives of numerous peers and friends in the 1990s, Ruocco looks back and realizes that there were a number

Below: Survivors attending the TAPS 25th Anniversary National Military Survivor Seminar participate in the National Memorial Day Parade in Washington, D.C., in May 2018.



CATHERINE CARBULLIDO



COURTESY OF TAPS

A Marine embraces a survivor during a TAPS event. The organization works closely alongside the military service branches and hosts national, regional and local seminars, events and retreats as well as providing casework assistance, connections to counseling and a variety of other services for those grieving the death of military loved ones.

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

The following helplines are staffed 24/7 and offer free and confidential support from people who care:

-If you're in suicidal crisis or emotional distress, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at **(800) 273-TALK (8255)**

-If you're grieving the loss of a military loved one and are in emotional crisis or just want to connect with programs and resources, call the TAPS 24/7 National Military Survivor Helpline at **(800) 959-TAPS (8277)**

of traumas her husband lived through during that time that he never really had the chance to properly grieve or process.

"We used to go to the memorial service, comfort the widow and then he'd jump back in the cockpit," said Ruocco, who added that after the third crash, "he started to just be withdrawn and depressed ... he was having trouble flying, he was making mistakes, he was even having trouble getting out of bed."

During this time, Ruocco feared that telling anyone about her husband's depression would only make things worse for him, even though she knew, particularly from her experience as a clinical social worker, that he needed help and support.

"He had worked so hard to get where he was and he was so well-respected and good at what he did," she said, alluding to the fear they both had that seeking help for depression would ultimately be a career-ender for him.

Eventually, he sought the advice of a Marine in his command, but the message he received was that depression didn't need treatment; rather, it was something he could overcome and push through if he could just be strong enough. This, she said, caused deep shame and guilt and the belief that his battle with mental health was a sign of weakness.

After a tour as a rotary-wing monitor and an exchange tour at Vance Air Force Base in Oklahoma instructing flight students in T-37 jets, John planned to start a new career as an airline pilot just prior to 9/11. But after the attacks that day, his sense of duty to country and Corps led him to join a Reserve unit that was scheduled to deploy to Iraq.

"He was not OK when he came back from Iraq," Ruocco recalled. She recognized that he had just returned from a combat zone and was trying to process the things he saw and did, all while transitioning back to being with his family. But she couldn't shake the feeling that something was "off." The two of them talked at length about getting him the help he needed.

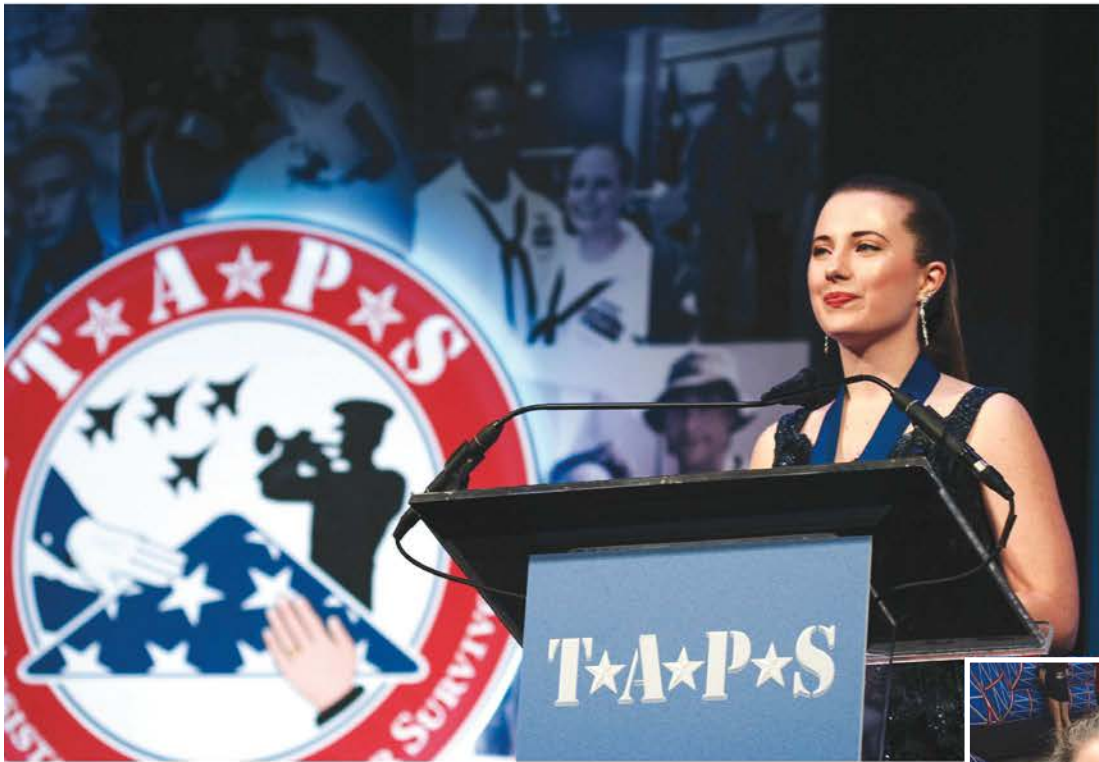
"Those conversations were really about him thinking that if he got help that people would look at him differently, think about him differently, that he wouldn't be a good leader, that people would think he just didn't want to deploy again," said Ruocco. "He was so consumed with that that he didn't really want to see anyone or talk to anyone."

The evening before he planned to visit the behavioral health clinic to get help, just three months after his return from Iraq, John Ruocco took his own life.

Kim Ruocco says her husband's death propelled her to try to understand suicide, something that just hours earlier he told her he would never do. She believes that military servicemembers,

"It's so important to get ahead of these things way, way before you have that perfect storm day, because if it could happen to John it could happen to anybody really."

—Kim Ruocco



COURTESY OF TAPS

Left: Angel Pansini, the surviving sibling of Marine Sgt Nicholas Pansini, speaks to attendees at the 2019 TAPS Honor Guard Gala in Washington, D.C., after accepting the Senator Ted Stevens Leadership Award for her work to help other surviving military families.

especially Marines, are particularly susceptible to suicidal ideations.

“If they get in a state of mind where they see themselves as the problem and they feel like they’re a burden to others, and they feel like everyone would be better off without them—in that dark place where they’re not thinking clearly, they’re going to go with their instinct which is to use lethal force to solve a problem,” Ruocco said.

She points out that her husband was even the designated suicide prevention officer during his tour as a flight instructor, and she recalls specific instances when he stayed up all night with young Marines who were suicidal, helping them come up with a plan to stay safe.

“He did that for other people, but couldn’t do it for himself,” Ruocco said. “Other Marines had been vulnerable with him and shared their deepest, darkest pain, but he didn’t give them that gift. He didn’t allow them the honor of helping him. And that’s the message for our Marines ... give them the gift of trusting them with your pain.”

Through her suicide prevention platform at TAPS, Ruocco emphasizes the importance of getting help for post-traumatic stress and depression long before you find yourself in a crisis situation.

“It’s so important to get ahead of these things way, way before you have that perfect storm day, because if it could happen to John, it could happen to anybody really,” said Ruocco. “It was years of unresolved grief and trauma and pain and trying to please and trying to do the right thing that all came together in a day where it was too much for him.”

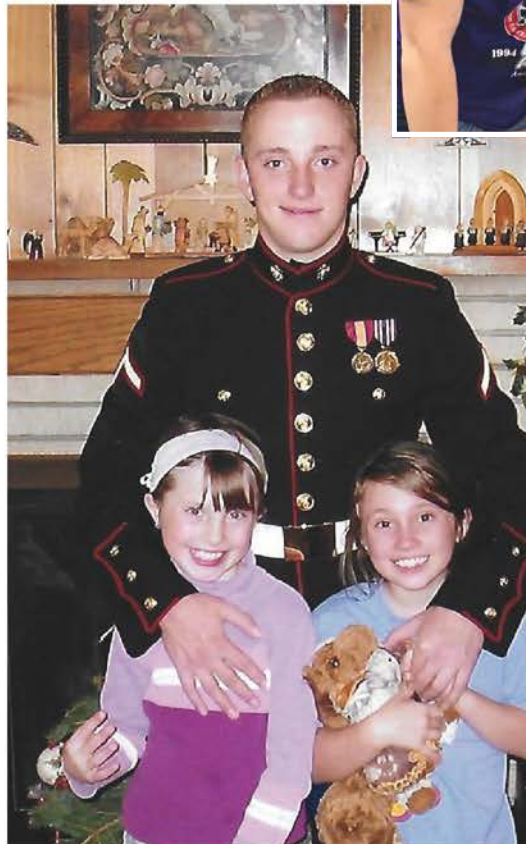
Today, more than 15 years after her husband’s death, Ruocco says she tries to live her life more intentionally and meaningfully—“and use what’s happened to us to do something good,” she said.

“It’s been quite a journey,” said Ruocco of her

Right: After attending TAPS Good Grief camps as a child, Pansini became a “legacy mentor,” and now helps young children who are grieving the loss of military loved ones.



COURTESY OF TAPS



COURTESY OF ANGEL PANSINI

Left: Sgt Nicholas Pansini, pictured here with his young sisters Angel and Shan, died by suicide in 2010. In the months after his death, the Pansini family attended their first TAPS seminar, and for Angel, the organization has been an integral part of her grief journey and her life.

experience with TAPS. “The people I’ve met along the way, the other survivors, have become family ... because when you have a common experience that’s so horrible and traumatic, the bonding and the amount of intimacy that you share is a depth of connection I think you don’t often see in your regular life, and that’s been a huge gift in this whole journey.”

TAPS’ development of suicide loss support and resources has benefitted the lives of many, including Angel Pansini, who was just 12 years old when her brother, Sergeant Nicholas Pansini, died by suicide in 2010, just six months after being honorably discharged from the Marine Corps following two tours in Iraq with 5th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO). She and her family attended their first TAPS seminar later that year.

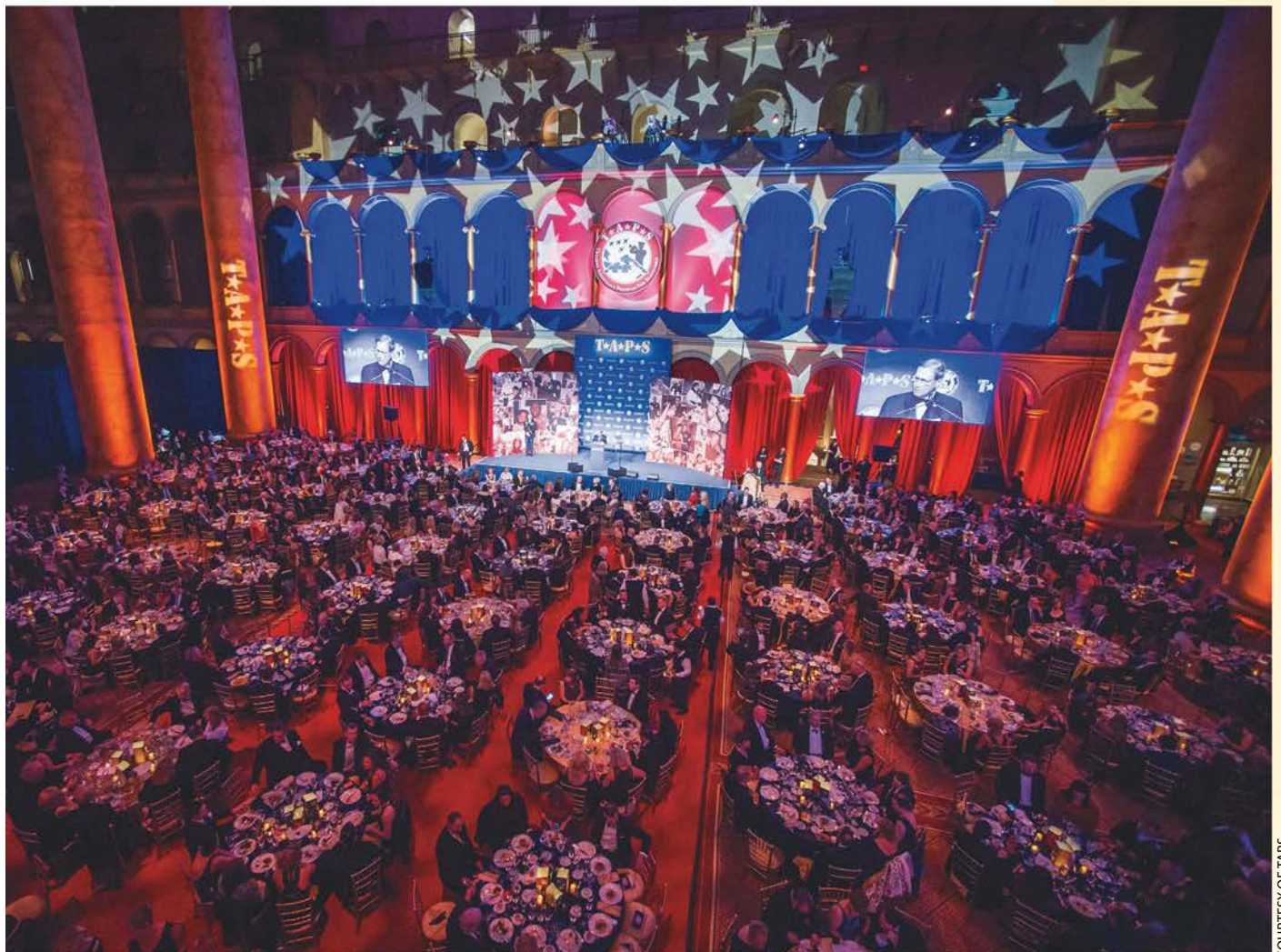
“From that first experience at 12 years old going to a suicide seminar I felt a lot of comfort with TAPS, and they completely helped shape my grief journey,” said Pansini, who recalls that initially she was angry at her dad for making her attend. “I remember I only wanted to feel my brother’s spine-cracking hugs. The thing about him that I



Left: Retired Marine Capt Kevin Penn, the TAPS 2019 Military Mentor of the Year, is pictured here with two of his mentees during the TAPS Honor Guard Gala in Washington, D.C.

COURTESY OF TAPS

Below: The palatial National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., is transformed for the annual TAPS Honor Guard gala, a black-tie event honoring military survivors.



COURTESY OF TAPS



CATHERING CARBULLIDO

“Lean in. The first stages of grief are scary, and it’s hard to reach out and trust an organization when you’re in such a vulnerable spot, but TAPS is absolutely going to be there every step of the way.”

—Angel Pansini

TAPS communications department while completing her undergraduate degree.

In 2019, Pansini was recognized as the recipient of TAPS’ annual Senator Ted Stevens Leadership Award, named for the late U.S. Senator from Alaska who helped Carroll found TAPS, and is presented to “a young military survivor who has demonstrated outstanding leadership and service to other surviving military families.”

The award is presented at the annual TAPS Honor Guard Gala, an awe-inspiring, black-tie event honoring survivors. During the gala, held at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., Pansini was honored to have the opportunity to look out across a large audience and talk about her brother and how far she’s come in her grief journey thanks in large part to TAPS.

Pansini’s message to survivors like her is this: “Lean in. The first stages of grief are scary, and it’s hard to reach out and trust an organization when you’re in such a vulnerable spot, but TAPS is absolutely going to be there every step of the way. Everyone who’s a part of TAPS will embrace you and love you.”

TAPS resources and support are available to all those grieving the loss of a fallen servicemember, regardless of how much time has passed since their death; what their relationship was with the deceased; or what their duty status was at the time of their passing.

In addition to the annual National Military Survivor Seminar and Good Grief camps, TAPS offers casework and education support services, regional seminars and youth programs, empowerment retreats, expeditions around the world, connections to counseling in a survivor’s community, local care groups and one-day “TAPS Togethers,” assistance with navigating benefits and resources and even opportunities to attend sponsored sports and entertainment events.

And despite the organization’s tremendous growth and the addition of programs and services, the core mission of TAPS has remained the same since day one.

“Our niche, first and foremost, is peer-based emotional support,” said Carroll. “Peer support works. Connecting with others who can normalize and validate your own experience in grief really works. Grief is not a mental illness. Grief isn’t a physical injury. Grief isn’t something that you can take a pill for or put a bandage on, or ‘see someone’ to fix. We grieve because we love ... and the one thing that we can do to help get through is just know that we’re not alone.”

NOREEN DOLOUGHTY

Above: A Marine teaches a young survivor how to salute while she attends the Evening Parade at Marine Corps Barracks Washington, D.C., during the TAPS Military Survivor Seminar, May 25, 2018.

loved and that I missed was the way he hugged me, and then instead I felt the embrace of my first mentor, Alexandra, and Alexandra’s embrace really softened the sting of loss.”

Pansini’s experience with TAPS was so impactful that in 2017 she became a “legacy mentor”—a survivor who attended the Good Grief camp as a child and now provides support to young surviving military children. This experience has deepened her understanding of grief and her realization that everyone grieves differently. She has spoken about suicide loss at various events and has written articles for the *TAPS Magazine* and *The Washington Post*. Currently, she works as an intern with the

Right: A survivor holds a photo in memory of a fallen Marine loved one during the National Memorial Day Parade in Washington, D.C., May 28, 2018.





SGT DANA BEESLEY, USMC

The Placido Jaramillo sisters, Maria, Melissa and Vanessa; and the Valentine sisters, Amber and Ashley, all graduated from MCRD Parris Island, S.C., Nov. 13, 2020.

Sisters by Blood Become Sisters-in-Arms

Two sets of sisters—Amber and Ashley Valentine and Maria, Melissa and Vanessa Placido Jaramillo—graduated from Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., Nov. 13, 2020, and now not only share the bond of sisterhood, but also the pride of becoming United States Marines.

Three days before her grandfather passed away, Ashley Valentine made a promise to carry on his legacy of military service. After Ashley decided to join the Marine Corps, her older sister, Amber, made the decision to enlist as well.

“After talking with the recruiter about how it would impact my life, I was committed,” Amber said. “I was ready to go no matter what.”

Amber waited for her sister to be medically approved before she went to recruit training. The Manassas, Va., natives both agreed that it helped to have each other to rely on during recruit training.

“I went through a moment during first phase where I received some bad news in

a letter, and she was there to be a shoulder for me to lean on,” Amber said of Ashley.

While the two will not be attending Marine Combat Training (MCT) together—Ashley suffered a hip fracture prior to graduation and will remain at Parris Island while she heals—the sisters both have faith and confidence in each other despite their physical distance.

After they complete MCT, Amber will continue on in the communications field and Ashley will be certified as a motor transportation operator.

“I know she’s going to be OK,” Ashley said of her sister. “She’s always been independent, and I know she’s going to succeed in her career.”

When Maria, Vanessa and Melissa Placido Jaramillo were young children, they made a pact to join the military together, and it was their unbreakable bond that got them through the trials of recruit training.

The three sisters were born in Panama and moved to Las Vegas, Nev., when they were young. Maria said she loved war

movies growing up, and when she saw “Tears of the Sun” for the first time, she was inspired to join the military. She was motivated to become a Marine, to honor her family and give back to the country that gave her so much.

During recruit training, it was friendly competition and daily positive affirmation that kept their relationship with each other strong, Melissa said.

“When one of us is lacking and the other is strong in that area, we always push each other to become the best we can be,” said Melissa.

“We have an unbreakable bond,” said Maria. “We are always together, but we know how to live separately. I know that my sisters will always be there for me even when they are not physically with me.”

The Placido Jaramillo sisters are looking forward to what the Marine Corps has in store for them. All three intend to continue their college education and become U.S. citizens.

Sgt Dana Beesley, USMC

MARFORSPACE: Marines Join Space Command

General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, directed the activation of a new Marine Corps Forces command subordinate to the newest unified combatant command, United States Space Command, effective Oct. 1, 2020.

Marine Corps Forces Space Command (MARFORSPACE), created from the existing space expertise in Marine Corps Forces Strategic Command, will focus on providing space operational support to the Fleet Marine Force while building a convergence capability to increase warfighter lethality.

Marine Corps Major General Matthew G. Glavy is the first commander of MARFORSPACE and is dual-hatted as the commander of Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command. Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., will initially serve as the home for MARFORSPACE.

“We have an incredible opportunity to create a synergy across the information environment based on our unique position within the naval and joint force,” MajGen Glavy said. “Space and cyber are critical capabilities in the information environment that, when brought together, can provide a competitive advantage. Convergence requires flexible and interconnected teams focused on solving hard problems with speed. We cannot be successful in these technology-heavy domains without prioritizing people, ideas and things ... in that order.”

While MajGen Glavy commands both MARFORSPACE, which reports to



CPL ELIJAH ABERNATHY, USMC

A Marine with 1/8, 2ndMarDiv is presented the French fourragere during a ceremony at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., Nov. 25, 2020. The braided cord, originally awarded to the 5th and 6th Marine Regiments for their historic accomplishments in France during WW I, was presented to the Marines of 1/8 as the battalion was realigned under 6th Marines in accordance with the Commandant’s Force Design 2030.

USSPACECOM, and MARFORCYBER, which reports to U.S. Cyber Command, the two units will remain separate and distinct commands.

“I am humbled and honored to have the opportunity to lead this new organization,” said MajGen Glavy. “This is a pivotal time for our nation. The Commandant has made the bold move Marines are known for to ensure our relevancy and readiness.”

MARFORSPACE

In Move to 6th Marine Regiment, 1/8 Receives French Fourragere

Leaders from 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division recently welcomed “The Beirut Battalion” to their ranks, and the Marines and Sailors of 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment were formally awarded the historic French fourragere, also known as the Croix de Guerre, during a ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Nov. 25, 2020.

The integration was a result of the realignment of 1/8 under 6th Marine Regiment as part of the Commandant’s Force Design 2030.

France awarded the fourragere to the Marines and Sailors of the 5th and 6th Marine Regiments in 1918 for their heroism and bravery in the battles of Belleau Wood, Soissons and Château-Thierry during World War I. To this day, the 5th and 6th Marines are the only Marine Corps units authorized to wear the braided cord. This ceremony marked a rare occurrence in that an infantry unit that originally is from neither of these regiments received the coveted fourragere.

The first award of the Croix de Guerre came at Belleau Wood where the 5th and 6th regiments were recognized for their brilliant courage, vigor, spirit and tenacity. During the battle, the Marines overcame hardship and devastating loss and captured key terrain from the German army.

The second award of the Croix de Guerre followed shortly after the Battle of Soissons, during which Marines of both regiments seized enemy positions in what was considered one of the most dashing victories of the war.

The final award came after the Battle of Champagne, which opened western approaches to the Argonne and sparked a momentous shift in the war that contributed to the allied victory.

“It’s an honor that I don’t think they [the Marines and Sailors of 1/8] realize, but they will understand the magnitude of what it means to wear that rope around their arm once they understand the history and lineage of where others came from,” said Master Gunnery Sergeant Shawn E. Hughes, the 1/8 battalion operations chief. “The first time I was awarded the French fourragere was in 1997. I was assigned with 3rd Bn, 5th Marines. Standing in formation, I wasn’t sure what it was about, but once I read the history behind the French fourragere, it was phenomenal [and] astounding what the Marines went through during WW I in the trenches of Belleau Wood. It’s about more than me, it’s about the institution and the Marine to the left and right of them.”

This battalion addition to 6th Marine



COURTESY OF MARFORCYBER

SgtMaj Jay Williamson, left, and MajGen Matthew Glavy, right, visit Peterson AFB, Colo., home of U.S. Space Command, in October 2020. MajGen Glavy, commander of MARFORCYBER, is now also the commander for MARFORSPACE.

Regiment signifies a visible change to the face of 2ndMarDiv fighting units. As outlined in Force Design 2030, “the Objective Force ground combat element will consist of seven infantry regimental headquarters and allows for the Corps to build a more agile, efficient and lethal fighting force.”

2ndMarDiv

HITT Small Unit Leaders Course Trains Marines to be “Fit to Fight”

Marines participated in a High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) Small Unit Leaders course at Gunners’ Gym on Camp Foster, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, Nov. 16-20, 2020.

The program’s purpose is to enhance operational fitness levels and optimize combat readiness by providing strength and conditioning training. The weeklong course consists of learning seven foundational movements: hinge, push, pull, squat, lunge, rotation and core strength.

“I am just really happy to be here today,” said Amanda Fields, a fitness and HITT coordinator for health promotions with Marine Corps Community Services. “I love instructing, developing new coaches and seeing Marines possess a passion for fitness that maybe they didn’t know they had.”

Due to COVID-19 mitigation efforts, the program was modified to limit the number of participants to 10 people to help ensure guidelines were met, explained Fields. In

addition, sanitization of equipment and adequate social distancing was followed at all times. Continuing the program in the midst of a pandemic is important because it allows staff to teach Marines how to run a unit physical training event while following additional health guidelines.

In order to enroll in the course, a Marine must be a corporal or above, have a first-class Combat Fitness Test and Physical Fitness Test within 30 days of the course, and be in a full duty status within the last six months.

“This course helps combat readiness and fitness because it focuses on workouts that can align with potential real-life scenarios,” said Sergeant David Espinoza, a training noncommissioned officer with General Facilities. “HITT focuses on proper form and execution to reduce injury, ultimately keeping us in the fight.”

The program is taught by MCCS employees with an overall goal of developing Marines into better leaders and coaches and a focus on injury prevention and producing better tactical athletes.

“The HITT program helps us work on ourselves functionally and as a person with the help from great instructors that push us past what we originally think our limits are,” said Espinoza. “The course gives us the knowledge we need to bring back to our Marines and show them how to take care of themselves and do everything in their power to maintain combat readiness and combat effectiveness.”

Cpl Karis Mattingly, USMC

Coming Soon: New Boot For Cold Weather Conditions

During fiscal year 2021, Marine Corps Systems Command plans to begin fielding a new boot that protects Marines in cold climates.

The Marine Corps Intense Cold Weather Boot (ICWB) is a full-grain, leather boot designed for use in temperatures as cold as 20 below zero. The ICWB allows Marines to complete various missions that might involve hiking or skiing in arduous, cold weather environments without having to change boots.

“In order to effectively conduct your mission in a cold weather environment, you need to be warm,” said Todd Towles, project officer of cold weather gear with the program manager for infantry combat equipment at MCSC. “This boot helps to accomplish this goal.”

The Marine Corps currently employs both a temperate and an extreme cold weather boot. The Temperate Weather Marine Corps Combat Boot (TWMCCB) is designed for employment in conditions between 20 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit, while the Extreme Cold Weather Vapor Barrier Boot is intended for use in environments between minus 65 and minus 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

However, Marines have said the TWMCCB does not provide enough warmth in sub-zero temperatures because the boot is not designed for such environments. They often have to switch to the Vapor Barrier boot, which can cause excessive sweating if worn extensively in environments above minus 20 degrees, said Towles.

The ICWB fills a capability gap left by these two boots and will be used in temperatures ranging from minus 20 degrees to 20 degrees Fahrenheit. Towles said the boot can last up to 18 months or longer if cared for and maintained correctly.

“The Intense Cold Weather Boot is not going to have the same insulation capabilities that the Extreme Cold Weather Boot provides, so the foot shouldn’t sweat as much,” said Towles. “It’s also less bulky than the Extreme Cold Weather Boot.”

From 2018 to 2020, MCSC held several user evaluations involving an early version of the ICWB, made of suede, in Iceland, Norway, Alaska and Montana, as well as at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif. Curtis Johnson, a logistics management specialist with MCSC, said Marines felt that the suede boot was well-constructed and durable but also thought it was bulky and did not dry well once wet.

Leveraging this feedback, MCSC then acquired a full-grain boot in 2020. Ma-



CPL KARIS MATTINGLY, USMC

CWO-3 Phoeuk Sambo executes a shoulder press during the HITT Small Unit Leaders Course at Gunners’ Gym on Camp Foster, MCB Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, Nov. 19, 2020. HITT programs allow Marines to enhance operational fitness levels and optimize combat readiness by providing strength and conditioning training.



MATT GONZALES

Capt Caleb Haney, a project officer with the program manager for infantry combat equipment, MCSC, assembles the Marine Corps Intense Cold Weather Boot at MCB Quantico, Va., Nov. 13, 2020. Scheduled for fielding in fiscal year 2021, the ICWB is a full-grain, leather boot designed for use in temperatures as cold as 20 below zero.

rines indicated the full-grain boot dried well but didn't provide enough warmth in below-zero temperatures. Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher Latham, an infantry weapons officer for 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, assessed the updated boot at Bridgeport in 2020.

"When the temperature dipped into the negative-degree range, your feet became very cold," said Latham. "I believe that we need more insulation in the boot to get down into the negative temperatures."

The program office then added an additional 200 grams of insulation to the

boot. If a Marine is wearing the boot for extended periods of time in sub-zero temperatures, MCSC provides a protective overboot for additional warmth if needed. The improved ICWB is a black leather boot that repels moisture and is also less bulky than the earlier prototype.

"The first prototype ICWB we tested received mixed reviews, but the second prototype with the added insulation has been well-received by Marines thus far," said Johnson. "The boot is similar to the boots they wear every day."

The program office expects the ICWB to begin fielding in the second quarter of fiscal year 2021. Towles believes the ICWB will serve the warfighter well in the coming years.

"The ICWB lightens the load for the Marines by their needing only one boot for fighting and ski missions, as opposed to in the past when Marines had to maintain two boots," said Towles. "I believe these boots will further support Marines in cold-weather environments and help them achieve mission success."

MCSC



Crazy Caption Contest

Winner



GYSGT EVAN AHLIN, USMC

"So I missed the chimney again. Oh well."

Submitted by:
Hugh Pratt
Bath, Mich.

This Month's Photo



SGT PATRICIA MORRIS, USMC

(Caption) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ ZIP _____

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

Lay Bare a Few More Nerves: Under Fire at Roi-Namur

By Geoffrey Roecker

Like many of his comrades in the 4th Marine Division, First Lieutenant Philip Emerson Wood Jr. got his first taste of combat in Operation Flintlock—the invasion of Roi-Namur and the surrounding islets in early February 1944.

Wood, a 23-year-old Swarthmore alumnus, Yale Law student, and graduate of the 12th Reserve Officers' Class at Quantico, was a weapons platoon leader in Company A, 1st Battalion, 24th Marines. He wrote lengthy, insightful letters about his strange new life in the service—most of which were addressed to his mother Margretta and younger sister Gretchen, collectively called the “Dear Girls.”

On 2 April 1944—the second anniversary of his enlistment—Wood sat down to record his impressions of combat. The resulting letter, a cathartic explosion of thoughts, pride, fear and sorrow, is unusual for its degree of detail and poetic, yet brutal honesty. Most battalion censors would have cut such a letter to ribbons, but Wood just happened to be the censoring officer, and his missive reached home intact. The result is an unusually detailed look at a battle which is often glossed over in larger histories, but which left a profound impression on thousands of men.

The letter presented here has been edited for length and clarity.

2 April 1944

Dear Girls,

I've been thinking [of sending] you the story of Namur for quite some time. I guess I didn't because of censorship and because a great deal of what I saw wasn't nice and orderly and safe. That is, after all, the traditional view that one is supposed to impress on the loved ones at home.

I'm not writing because I want to shock or worry you, or because I'm proud of the dangers I've been through—it's just that knowing and loving you, I think that you would prefer knowing what it was like and how I felt, and thus what it will be like next time. Known fears and worries are limited ones. Unknown, they can become tremendous.



1stLt Philip Emerson Wood Jr., at Camp Maui in April 1944.

COURTESY OF GEOFFREY ROECKER

We knew where we were going as soon as we had been out to sea a day or two. We were issued many maps and photos, reams of intelligence data, spent long hours teaching the men. Physical exercise out in the hot sun, the huge convoy stretched out to the horizon all around us, swelteringly hot below decks, increasingly tense feeling all over the ship, sleeping on the cool decks with the breeze, the constant boil of the phosphorescent sea under the prow, the constant darkness and quiet, and the ever-constant star that twinkled red and blue. Singing every night, the company accordionist playing up on deck. More work during the day, firing the weapons over the side, rifle inspection, final word on boat assignment tables, the last time you clean and oil your rifle, fuse your hand grenade and hang it on your belt.

Land! Little low islands looking brilliantly green after weeks of blue sky and bluer water. The rumbling of guns, Roi and Namur marked by a thin trail of smoke threading across the sky. The Colonel [Franklin A. Hart] announces all events over the P.A. and is cheered by the men. This is it, the last officer's meeting, the Colonel's big red face, and bigger but unsteady grin under the only small light in the room, all the officers tense and still, getting the final dope, and deciding that we were excited but not afraid, and falling asleep with, strangely, no trouble at all.

Up before dawn, tight stomach but a ravenous appetite. Forgot to wake up Ted [1stLt Theodore K. Johnson, C/1/24 executive officer], and he almost missed the boat. The last time I saw him, he was mad as Hell and cursed me out for a knucklehead. Went down into the men's compartment, and they were all excited—we didn't see how there could be anything left. When we finally went over the net, I took off like a bat out of Hell for where I thought the Company was. I wandered from one rendezvous area to another and finally stumbled on A Company, shells screaming overhead, the smell of powder, the brilliantly blue lagoon, shivering with cold. The Word seemed clear that there was nothing left. I don't know how they thought they knew, but we believed it and felt bitterly disappointed. All the work,

“The whole right half of the island had heaved and coughed its flaming entrails up into the air, hundreds of feet above us—a pillar of fire in the daytime. The biggest munitions dump on the island had been mined and set off by the enemy.”



A Marine on neighboring Roi Island takes cover from the earth-shaking detonation on Namur. (USMC photo)

preparation, and worry seemed to be for nothing. There was nothing to do but walk ashore. About 40 minutes after the first wave went in, they called for us. We didn't know why, probably to share coconuts, but we started in.

When we were about 100 yards offshore a tremendous blast of air seemed to stop the boat, followed by a wave of sound that left everything throbbing. We involuntarily poked our heads up and looked. The whole right half of the island had heaved and coughed its flaming entrails up into the air, hundreds of feet above us—a pillar of fire in the daytime. The biggest munitions dump on the island had been mined and set off by the enemy. Concrete blocks rained into the water around us, every man muttered “Christ, this is it!” to himself, and a huge cloud of black ash drifted over the boat—so thick you couldn't breathe or see the man next to you in the boat—the most terrifying moment I've ever spent. There seemed to

be no more sound left in the world.

It was later determined that a demolitions team from F/2/24 breached a magazine containing torpedoes and bombs for aircraft based on Roi. The resulting explosion was the largest of the Pacific War up to that point. “Fox” Company suffered heavy casualties in the blast, and falling debris killed and wounded several men in boats offshore.

When it cleared, we were 10 yards from the beach (the ash stuck to the green and brown camouflage paint, and we fought the battle in blackface), the ramp went down, and I pounded ashore through the shallow water to find thousands of men crouched on the beach in the shelter of a slight rise. They were as thick as flies. I said, “another Tarawa” to myself, and found a Lieutenant that I knew calmly

The group known as the Agony Quartette aboard USS *DuPage* en route to the Marshall Islands. From left: First Lieutenants Philip Emerson Wood Jr., Frederic A. Stott, Harry D. Reynolds Jr. (WIA at Namur) and Theodore K. Johnson (KIA at Namur).



COURTESY OF GEOFFREY ROECKER

A rifle squad, bayonets fixed, prepares to move out into the thick underbrush on Namur's northern end.

trying to bandage a man who had half his face torn off by two machine gun bullets. He simply said, "Don't go up there, Phil, it's all mined. We had just knocked out the machine guns that were trained on the beach and started in and they blew it. It got Jim [1stLt James B. Heater, F/2/24] and every man in his platoon. We've lost a lot." I turned to go and stepped on a body burned black—so much foul meat; I cussed it and was mad at it when I should have been revolted.

The Captain [Irving Schechter] sensibly decided to go up through the blasted area. We moved out, scurrying from one shell hole to another as we realized for the first time that a lot of rifle fire was coming our way. There had been many buildings, pillboxes, and men there. Nothing was left but rubble—twisted iron, heaps of concrete, a few blasted palm stumps and shell-pocked earth; a super No Man's Land that you had read about so often, and here I was. This was the battle that I had pointed toward for so long. It all seemed



SGT ANDREW ZURICK, USMC

unreal. I felt detached, but very tense.

We met nothing but a few snipers until we came to the northern half of the island. There some shells had landed, but there was a lot of shrubbery and trees, many dugouts, pillboxes, and blockhouses—and almost all the Japanese left living on Roi and Namur. The first one I saw was half-naked, an officer brandishing a Samurai

sword. I slowly sighted on him, but before I squeezed the trigger he was down. One of my machine gunners was standing over him, smashed out a gold front tooth and put it in his pocket. I yelled, "Why?" He said because his dad had asked for one—I said I was glad it was for a sentimental reason.

I noticed Corporal [Arthur B.] Ervin up



USMC

Japanese soldiers huddled together in a trench on Namur met their end when Marines of the 4th Division landed on this important Central Pacific base. It took the leathernecks 24 hours to capture the island.

ahead, waving us on. As long as he was in the action, he stayed at least 50 yards ahead of anybody else in the Company. I took a couple of the others and went up to help him. He had stumbled on a dugout containing six or seven enemy, had fired at them, thrown a grenade or two, and come back for more. I went around behind the position and waited for any that might retreat. One did, and I shot him as he tried to sneak past me in the undergrowth. I was partly, very dimly conscious that I had killed, but more aware of the satisfying way my little carbine heaved in my hands and coughed up bullets.

A burst of machine-gun fire came from a blockhouse we were approaching; we all dove for nearby trenches, and Steve Hopkins and I landed in a small one. On a small projection lay a Japanese. I thought him dead and passed by him up the trench. Hoppy kept an eye on him, though, and when the wounded man rolled over to throw the grenade he had in his hand, Hoppy shot him. The kid was white-faced and chattery. "Did you see, Mr. Wood? Did you see the grenade? Did you see what he was going to do?"

PFC Stephen Peter Hopkins had recently joined Wood's platoon. His assignment caused a stir—his father was Harry Hopkins, personal advisor to President Franklin D. Roosevelt—and his return address was the White House. "Hoppy" was one of the most popular men in the platoon, and his actions likely saved Wood's life.

Over our heads all Hell broke loose. My machine guns behind me started a duel with the blockhouse, then a knee mortar started probing for our trench. During a lull, Ervin went forward again. He came on a machine-gun nest and killed two of the men manning it but was driven off when an officer knocked off his helmet with a round from his pistol. Ervin's face was sprayed with bits of lead. He came back and told us the situation. I hopped out and went back to assign the target to my mortars. By the time we had set up, the forward elements of the company had moved up too close to the position to let us fire safely.

That was the biggest trouble I had—our boys, the riflemen, were too eager to attack. Several times I could have saved lives if they had only waited for a preparatory mortar barrage, but they couldn't wait to close with the enemy. It made for a headlong, rushing attack that never gave the enemy a chance to reorganize. Every one of them is vividly conscious of the fact that he is a Marine.

We used bazookas on the blockhouse,



COURTESY OF GEOFFREY ROECKER

Lt Philip Emerson Wood Jr., at Quantico in 1942.

"Hoppy kept an eye on him, though, and when the wounded man rolled over to throw the grenade he had in his hand, Hoppy shot him.

The kid was white-faced and chattery. 'Did you see, Mr. Wood? Did you see the grenade? Did you see what he was going to do?' "

and finally it was silenced. Harry [*1stLt Harry Dare Reynolds, Jr., A/1/24 executive officer*] and Ervin ran across the open and threw hand grenades into the firing ports. I picked up Ervin's helmet to toss it to him, but it was knocked out of my hand by a sniper's bullet. Ervin hopped up on top of the blockhouse, and stood there silhouetted against the sky, legs spread apart, hatless, with blood on his face and his coat flung open, firing his rifle from the hip into the dugout that lay in front of Sgt [*Frank Allen*] Tucker and myself. He killed some, but fire kept coming at him from the dugout, so he jumped down, ran to it, and was hit just as he got in front of me. Harry and I yelled to him. He said he "didn't want any help" and pulled himself out with his right arm (he was hit in the side) and Harry had to order him back to the hospital. Ervin claimed that he could still throw grenades with his one arm.

Corporal Arthur Ervin, a Pearl Harbor veteran and former Marine Raider, was decorated with the Navy Cross and Purple Heart for these exploits. He returned to the company shortly before Wood wrote this letter, and Wood "nabbed" him for his second in command of the mortar section.

Sgt Tucker was in a hole on my left. He and Harry and Roy [*1stLt Roy Irving Wood Jr., 2nd Platoon*] and two or three from Roy's platoon and I gave the dugout a barrage of grenades—at a range of 10 yards, they were deafening. Tuck and Cpl [*Franklin C.*] Robbins charged first but were driven back by fire. Then five or six of us went over the edge of the embankment and shot everything that



COURTESY OF GEORGE A. SMITH

Stephen Hopkins turned down Officer Candidates School in favor of going to the Fleet Marine Force and served as an ammunition carrier for a machine gun squad in A/1/24. "Hoppy" died of wounds on Feb. 2, 1944, at the age of 18.

moved. A rifle came around a corner. I shot it out of the enemy's hands and someone else drilled him. He had a big silk flag tied to his rifle which I cut off and stuffed into my pocket. It's one of the few found on Namur.

When I turned, the rest of them had gone on running, stopping to fire when they saw a fleeing enemy, following the beachline along the island. My runner [PFC William J. Imm] and I started after them, heard heavy firing, and stopped to reconnoiter. We were almost up to a wide, cleared area, just off a road running parallel to the beach. The "Daring Dozen" were across the clearing and apparently having a hell of a fight 100 yards ahead of us. We crawled into a shell hole with a Lieutenant from D Company. He told us to stay down for Christ's sake, the road and the clearing were machine gun lanes, and the enemy had been killing anyone who tried to go up.

Only four of us got out of that trap whole, and that was Sgt Tucker's doing. Seeing that they were being methodically slaughtered, he stood up and opened fire with his rifle. As each Japanese arose out of the opposing trench to fire, Tucker carefully sighted in and shot him—often, as we found out later, right between the eyes. They think that he killed about 30 that way, put two enemy machine guns out of action, and gave the others a chance to pull the wounded into nearby shell holes. Bullets creased his helmet, punctured his canteen, and cut off his rifle belt, but he didn't get down until the rest of them were safely in position. Harry was hit in the leg, but Roy was alright.

Sergeant Frank Tucker, a 30-year-old former salesman, also received the Navy Cross for Roi-Namur. The story

"I lay on my back, looking up at a shell-scarred fragment of a tree that stood over our hole, watching the beautiful serene white terns soar over the battlefield—and for the first time, I was really afraid. Afraid of my own motives for staying there."

of the Daring Dozen was picked up in nationwide newspapers and resulted in Silver Star citations for Platoon Sergeant James Adams, 1stLt Reynolds, and Corporal Robbins.

I didn't know any of this until later. I only saw one man run across the clearing, and he was cut down—that was enough. I lay on my back, looking up at a shell-scarred fragment of a tree that stood over our hole, watching the beautiful serene white terns soar over the battlefield—and for the first time, I was really afraid. Afraid of my own motives for staying there. I knew damned well that it was foolish to think of going up, but that didn't matter. Yes, I was afraid, but it was a justifiable fear of a certain death. In the growing dusk I sat and worried—still firing forward, what could I do? We are too disorganized to effect a mass rush. A halftrack passed over our hole on the way up the road, but it is stopped by the sheer force of thousands of rounds from heavy



Marines on Namur Island in the Marshalls display some of the articles they rummaged from Japanese effects including Japanese beer, rifles, and a Samurai sword. These Marines are believed to belong to the comms platoon of 1/24.

machine guns—it backs off. I now admit that I'm afraid, but am no longer ashamed of it, and the halftrack gives me an idea.

When it became quite dark, I woke Imm up. He almost knifed me when I shook him awake—luckily, I called him by name. The firing had quieted down, and we scurried off in the dark to where I thought the command post was to try to arrange to have tanks brought up at dawn. We were challenged many times, often incorrectly—the first time, without thinking, I bawled out "You lug-headed sonofabitch, that's no way to give the password!" Everybody was jittery and trigger happy that night, and the more I sounded like a tough old gunnery sergeant, the more at home they would feel.

I found a phone and called up Battalion

SERGEANT ANDREW ZURICK, USMC



SERGEANT ANDREW ZURICK, USMC

to tell them what was happening and ask for tanks. Col Dyess [*Aquilla James Dyess, battalion commander*] surprised me by saying that the Captain had just radioed in the same dope and the same request. So I woke Imm up (with a long stick) and we headed back. We went by way of the beach around the island to avoid all the trigger-happy boys and were even more worried by the fact that we didn't hear any challenge at all. Only sporadic firing inland now, with 60 mm mortar parachute flares going off at regular intervals, during which we would freeze in whatever positions we happened to be in. Dead bodies everywhere, some lying in the shallow wash inside the coral reef. The island was beginning to smell already.

Back at the company, we found that

they had just moved reinforcements up. The Captain and "Fireball" Stott [*1st Lt Frederic A. Stott, D/1/24*] had placed half a dozen machine guns along our front line, which was about 50 yards from the enemy trenches and pillbox system. There wasn't much action that night. Some Japanese tried to crawl through our lines but didn't get very far. Hoppy got it that night as he was helping to dig in his machine gun.

An unfamiliar lieutenant ordered Hopkins' gun crew to leave their prepared position and redeploy farther forward—against the accepted wisdom not to move after dark. Hopkins was reaching for his carbine when he was shot in the head; mortally wounded, he was taken to the USS Bolivar (APA-34) where he died and

Japanese dead littering a field on Namur, Kwajalein Atoll, and mutilated coconut trees give the island a nightmarish look after Marines invaded the Marshall Islands.

was buried at sea. His death was widely reported in the newspapers in a variety of heroic exploits—however, some veterans insist Hoppy was the victim of friendly fire.

We crawled up to where the Captain was. He thought we were infiltrators, challenged us, but I was pretty deafened by the day's firing and didn't hear him. His runner almost plugged us before we were recognized. He had been on the left flank all day, the wounded had been evacuated, and we were expecting a counter-

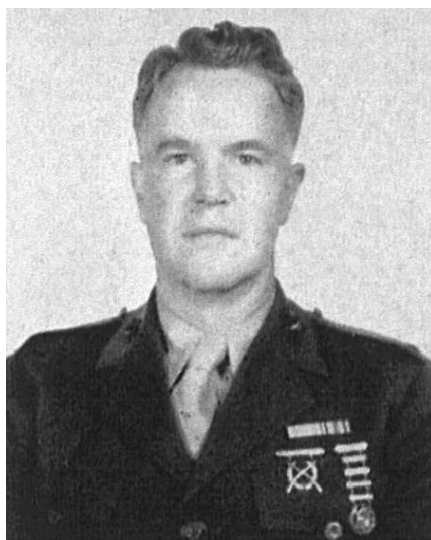


USMC

A company coming back down the beach just after the battle. The island had been secured 20 minutes earlier. Philip Wood spotted this photo in a March 1944 issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette* and identified his machine gunners at the right edge of the frame.

attack that night. We had been told before we went in to expect it; no matter how hopeless the situation, the enemy would always counterattack to save face and all that. They did it, but it hit our left, in B Company's sector. Wild yelling and all the accoutrements, firecrackers, sword-waving officers who shouted commands in English. B Company was pushed back by the sheer violence of the attack, and they suffered pretty heavy casualties, but their 60 mm mortars saved the day. They fired at a perilously close range but succeeded in breaking up the charge. A damned good weapon—my favorite—if I had enough of them and enough men, I think I could pretty near win this war with them alone.

Approximately one company of Japanese soldiers struck at a gap between B/1/24 and I/3/24 in a fierce 45-minute fight. Company B took severe casualties in this encounter; their 3rd Platoon was "practically wiped out [but] had hundreds



COURTESY OF GEOFFREY ROECKER

LtCol Aquilla J. Dyess, known as "Jimmie" or "Big Red," commanded 1/24 in action on Namur and led their final attack on foot until killed by a Japanese gunner. He was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously.

of dead Japanese piled in front of its positions" as Captain Milton G. Cokin later wrote.

At dawn, I crawled back to the guns and sat there with them, cleaned my carbine in the growing light, ate a couple of squares of chocolate—the first food I'd had in 24 hours—drank a little water, the first I'd had in almost a day, and smoked my first cigarette with relish as soon as it was light enough not to show. We fired about a hundred rounds, poured them into the dugouts and pillboxes that had given us so much trouble the day before. We heard screams and groans from where they fell, and it was all we could do to keep from cheering. Our shelling brought return rifle fire, but they were damned poor shots and we finally cut them out of the trees. The tanks finally came up, Col Dyess leading the way on foot. He was fearless to the point of being foolhardy, refused to take cover—even buck privates were yelling at him to get down, but he'd only wave

his Tommy gun at them and say he was a lucky Irishman.

That attack broke the back of the resistance. From then on, the Japanese were disorganized and fleeing. When the mortars went out of action, I went up and helped a couple of my machine-gun squads root them out of their dugouts. The mortars had made a slaughterhouse of the area, and then we chased the few remaining enemy up the tank trap, an 8-foot trench that ran around the island just inside the beach.

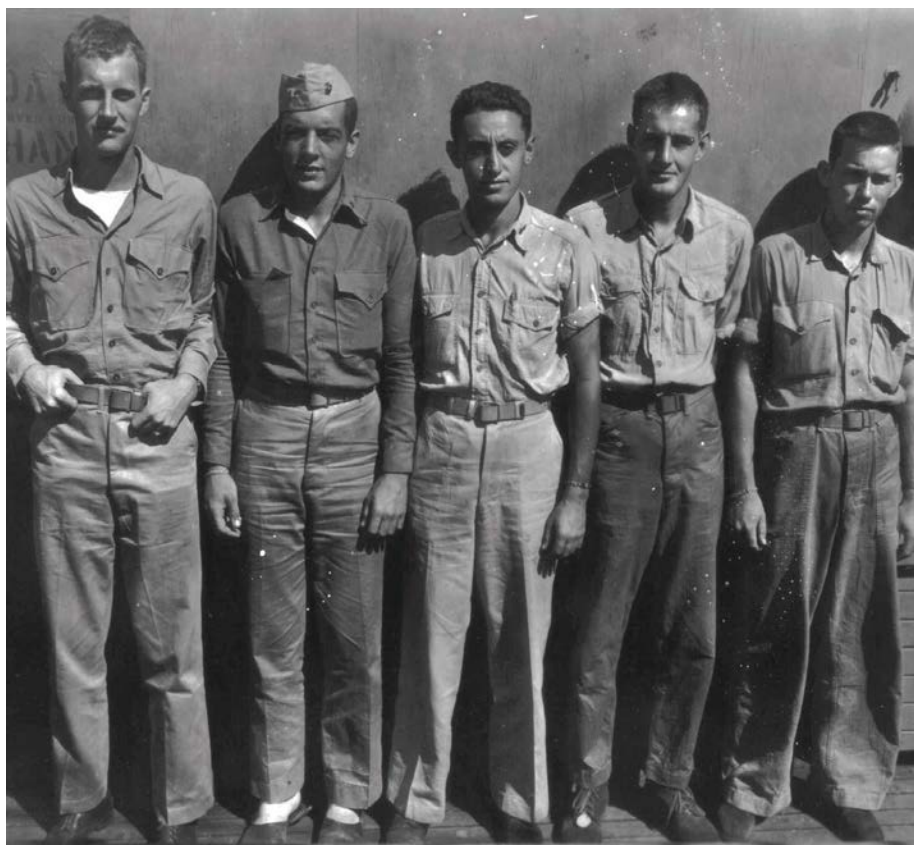
It was like hunting rats. They scurried and scrambled, hid among the bodies of their own dead. There were hundreds of dead, killed by the bombing the day before, lying in the trench, horribly twisted and mangled, headless, bodies laid open to the backbone, small pieces of flesh splattered on the ground, and carcasses so thick that at times we had to walk on them to get by. I remember stepping over a Samurai sword but was too tired to even pick it up. Didn't care. Col Dyess was killed halfway up by a machine gun that they had set up in ambush. Fired at me, I think, but I heard the click of the bolt and hit the deck, and the shots went over me.

Lieutenant Colonel Aquilla "Big Red" Dyess received a Medal of Honor posthumously for Roi-Namur—the only one awarded to a member of 1/24 during World War II. The airfield on Roi was later renamed "Dyess Field" in his honor. He is the only individual to receive both the Medal of Honor and the Carnegie Medal for civilian heroism.

Finally, it was over. We walked back down the beach and assembled in the center of the island and began to find out who was killed. I realized that my face was taut and tired, and it was from pulling my lips tight into a set expression so that the sight of those piled bodies wouldn't show on my face. My platoon found a couple of cases of Japanese beer—they forced five on me, and I promptly got tight—no food and almost no water.

And when the mopping up was over, and the terns were again beginning to show luminous white against the darkening sky, we fell exhausted on the ground. Never have I been so weary, so drained of feeling. I heard that Ted had been killed, and two boys in my platoon. These were merely facts to be noted, not to feel.

Lieutenant Wood's Co A lost three killed or died of wounds, and an additional 23 wounded in action—14 percent of their landing strength. The battalion as a whole suffered 114 casualties (34 KIA, 79 WIA, 3 sick), with the lion's share in Co B.



COURTESY OF GEOFFREY ROECKER

Officers of A/1/24 aboard SS Robin Wentley after Namur. From left: 1stLt Philip Wood, 1stLt Roy I. Wood Jr. (no relation), Capt Irving Schechter, 1stLt Endecott Osgood and 1stLt David E. Smith. Missing is company XO, 1stLt Harry D. Reynolds Jr., who was WIA.

"I realized that my face was taut and tired, and it was from pulling my lips tight into a set expression so that the sight of those piled bodies wouldn't show on my face."

We slept, although it wasn't sleep that we needed—just a chance to stretch out in the sun, alone, and do and think of nothing at all.

We had to bury those dead, foul, rotting bodies, dig in defenses, and remove all the duds from the area. We were lucky enough to have left the island before it was bombed. We watched that from the lagoon. It reminded me of the Fourth of July, that time we were on the Boston boat and watched the fireworks along the sound.

And we came back here, to this paradise, to rest, that we might fight as well again.

All my love,
Phil

"It's a letter, not an article," Phil Wood said of his report. "I know I could do a much better job ... telling the tale of the next one." He would not have the chance. On July 5, 1944, Lt Wood was killed in action on Saipan. His close friend, Sergeant Arthur Ervin, fell while attempting a rescue. Sgt Frank Tucker also died on Saipan. Fred Stott and Franklin Robbins later were recipients of the Navy Cross, and both suffered serious wounds on Iwo Jima. William Imm, twice wounded, was discharged as a corporal in 1945. Captain Irving Schechter and Lieutenants Harry Reynolds and Roy Wood ended their careers as highly decorated Marine Corps colonels.

Wood's entire letter collection, and a history of his battalion, can be found online at www.1-24thmarines.com

Author's bio: Geoffrey W. Roecker, a cousin of 1stLt Philip E. Wood Jr., is the author of "Leaving Mac Behind: The Lost Marines of Guadalcanal." He is documenting the history of 1st Battalion, 24th Marines (www.1-24thmarines.com) and advocating for the return of missing Marine Corps personnel (www.missingmarines.com). 🇺🇸



PO2 JAMES K. LEE, USN

Then-Second Lady Karen Pence applauds during the MSEP new partner induction ceremony in 2019. Both Pence and Acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller gave virtual speeches in 2020 as the partnership celebrated reaching a milestone of 500 participating employers.

Partnership Marks Milestone in Military Spouse Employment

On Dec. 9, 2020, 86 new companies were inducted into the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP), a Defense Department program that joins with the civilian sector to employ military spouses worldwide. The new additions bring the total number of MSEP employers to 500.

Acting Defense Secretary Chris Miller and his wife, Kate, along with then-Second Lady Karen Pence addressed the

importance of MSEP in pre-recorded remarks.

“As a former active-duty soldier and military spouse, Kate and I recognize the cost of the sacrifices made by those in uniform and their loved ones,” the acting secretary said. “They bear the burden of grueling deployments, they uproot their lives every few years for permanent change-of-station moves, and ... to honor them, the Department of Defense (DOD) and a grateful nation are committed to improving their quality of life and providing our families the support they rightly deserve, every step of the way.”

MSEP is a one-of-a-kind partnership that plays an important role in recruiting and retaining military spouses. Since 2011, more than 175,000 military spouses have been hired through the partnership for jobs across the country. Military spouses bring many talents and experiences to the private sector, Miller noted.

“This partnership comes with great responsibility,” the second lady said. “I’ve heard that the vetting process is serious business, and that partners are required to sign a statement of support with the DOD to commit to recruit, hire, promote and retain military spouses to all of the new partners.”

Pence thanked the company partners for taking an important step to support the nation’s military spouses.

“Your new partnership will make a difference and help our nation’s military readiness,” she said, addressing the 86 new partners. “It’s important to take care of our military spouses and their children

so that servicemembers can stay focused on their missions and remain ready to fight and protect our freedoms.”

When Pence unveiled the Military Spouse Awareness Campaign in 2018, she wanted to elevate and encourage the nation’s military spouses. And in her travels throughout the country and the world as second lady, she educated military spouses on employment solutions.

“For example, we improved the policy for spouses pursuing a degree or certification,” Pence said. “You cannot be made ineligible solely because your servicemember has been promoted to a higher grade. Military spouses can now retain their state of residency for business purposes if they move out of state as a result of a change of station.”

The secretary of defense is now authorized to fund the creation of interstate compacts to improve professional licensure portability, the second lady added.

MSEP has been especially important in recent months as people navigate the most challenging public health crisis in more than a century, Miller said. “Yet, if there’s one thing we all know is that military families are well-equipped in overcoming the challenges. And over the past year, our nation’s employers witnessed their skill resilience firsthand.”

The partnership is part of a broader effort to help military spouses in the DOD’s global community. It also helps spouses hit the ground running after moving to a new state. The partnership has improved license reciprocity among states, and 43 states have enacted legislation on

“YOU BETTER WATCH OUT”—
Sgt William Hinkle, an aerial observer with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Training Squadron 303, Marine Aircraft Group 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, waves to families while dressed as Santa Claus during a holiday flyover in a UH-1Y Venom helicopter near Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 5, 2020. Since efforts to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus impacted holiday plans for many living in Southern California, HMLAT-303 wanted to spread holiday cheer by safely bringing Santa Claus to families living on base and in the surrounding area.



LCPL DRAKE NICKELS, USMC



LISA FERDINANDO

Tammy E. Call, director of the National Museum of the United States Army, cuts the ribbon at the museum's opening at Fort Belvoir, Va., Nov. 11, 2020.

reciprocity in the past three years.

Through MSEP, DOD is also engaged with the State Department to improve on- and off-base hiring opportunities for spouses and dependents living overseas, the acting secretary said.

"Thanks to [several] efforts, we've seen a 20 percent increase in military spouse hiring just this year. That's an achievement we should all be proud of," Miller added of the progress made in 2020.

The acting secretary commended the newest members of MSEP for their commitment to U.S. troops and their loved ones, especially during such a challenging time, and added that he hopes more businesses and organizations follow that devotion to military family members and their servicemembers across the force who endure the hardships of military life while navigating the complexities of employment and other challenges.

"For this, you have our admiration, gratitude and commitment to support you every step of the way," Miller said to MSEP partners.

The second lady challenged MSEP business leaders to spread the word about the significant role that military spouses—the "homefront heroes"—play in the defense of the country. "Join us as we encourage other business leaders to join this vital movement to hire and retain military spouses," she encouraged.

To learn more about MSEP and its partners, visit <https://msepjobs.militaryonesource.mil/msep/>.

Terri Moon Cronk

New U.S. Army Museum Tells Story of Soldiers, War

Marines from all eras, supporters and friends of the Corps, and future Marines have flocked to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., since its opening in 2006. Now, their counterparts from the U.S. Army have their own museum, the National Museum of the United States Army, which opened at Fort Belvoir, Va., Nov. 11, 2020. Its exhibits, which tell the entire story of the Army, will surely be of interest to Marines as well.

Construction on the 185,000-square-foot museum, which is just a 16-mile drive from the National Mall in Washington, D.C., began in 2017. The museum is a joint venture between the Army and the Army Historical Foundation.

The museum includes the "Soldiers' Stories Gallery," as well as various galleries that cover Army involvement in significant periods of U.S. history. These include the Revolutionary War and the founding of the United States, the period leading up to and including World War I, World War II, the Cold War and the "Changing World Gallery," which chron-

icles the period from 1990 to today.

Special features of the museum include a theater; a gallery that focuses on the Army's relationship with civilian society; an immersive experience that allows visitors to "experience" what trench warfare was like during WW I; and a gallery that documents the experience of WW II's Nisei soldiers, who were born in the U.S. to parents who emigrated from Japan.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Army General Mark A. Milley, said the museum will finally allow visitors to understand what the Army does to protect American freedom.

"We cannot truly appreciate the sacrifice of our soldiers, from the Continental Army to today, or comprehend what they went through unless we see the weapons they used, feel the uniforms they wore, hear the stories they told, or read the letters they wrote," he said.

While visitors of today will never experience what soldiers of the past went through fighting America's wars, GEN Milley said, the National Museum of the United States Army will allow them to see all that history in one place for the first time.

For more information, visit www.thenmusa.org.

C. Todd Lopez



TOGETHER

They Stood the Test of Time

& THE MARINE CORPS



Compiled by Patricia Everett

Marriage in the Marine Corps requires many sacrifices, including spending significant time apart, missing anniversaries, birthdays and holidays. We asked Leatherneck readers to share their wedding photos with us as well as stories about how they met and their Marine Corps journey. Here are a few of the submissions we received. The most impressive part: All of these couples have made been married for more than 30 years.

Master Sergeant Douglas M. Hall, USMC (Ret) and Chief Yeoman Kathleen Melville-Hall, USN (Ret)

Married May 1, 1984—“When my husband Doug and I met, he was a gunny, and I was a Navy yeoman. When we decided to marry and walk off into the sunset together, people were aghast. ‘The Navy and the Marine Corps don’t get along!’ His buddies were taking bets on how long it would last. That was 36-plus years ago. Doug is a Vietnam vet and I served in Southwest Asia during Operation Desert Fox—a small dust-up between Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. I’d say it’s been an adventure. It takes a special cat to be a military wife. That it can be done is a testament to many women who have done so.”

YNC Kathleen Melville-Hall, USN (Ret)



Corporal and Mrs. John L. Seubert
Married Oct. 28, 1950—“My fiancée, Sophia, and I had planned to be married on Oct. 28, 1950, but I was recalled to active duty in June. I was able to get a weekend pass for the wedding in October. I left on Sunday to return to active duty. I didn’t get home until the next summer, June 1951. We are still very active even though we are in our 90s. I volunteer with many veteran and church activities and am a past commandant of the Marine Corps League. I served during World War II, Cold War and Korean War and consider myself a Marine for 75 years.”

Cpl John L. Seubert





Colonel and Mrs. Jerry L. Durrant, USMC (Ret)

Married May 14, 1970—“Cheryl and I were high school sweethearts and have been together since 1966. I was married as a private first class between graduation from Infantry Training Regiment at Camp Pendleton and the beginning of Comm School. The key to a long and happy marriage? It might be that I spent the majority of my time with the Fleet Marine Force in various leadership billets which entailed many long deployments. Cheryl has always been supportive as she knew that the Marine Corps had been my dream career since I was a child. She took the many deployments in stride and never once complained about the Marine Corps or why I had to take off yet again. While in “India” 3/1 in early May 1971, we redeployed back to Camp Pendleton from Vietnam. We were given a few weeks leave and being a lance corporal, and married, I didn’t have a great deal of money, so I was unable to buy an airplane ticket to go see Cheryl. I called her and she wired me funds through Western Union. When I got to their office, they had the money but first I had to answer a question to make sure I was who I said I was. The question was, ‘What is the date of your [wedding] anniversary?’ I missed it by a day, and they wouldn’t give me the money. I had the wedding date inscribed on the inside of my wedding band but when Cheryl bought the ring it was too small. I had to fight to get the ring off and then was able to show them the date and received the travel funds. We have three children and six grandchildren.”

Col Jerry L. Durrant, USMC (Ret)

Sergeant Major and Mrs. Earl Davis, USMC (Ret)

Married April 3, 1955—“In June 1951, I saw Claudia at a church carnival and asked a friend who she was. He asked why I wanted to know, and I responded, ‘Because that’s the woman I’m going to marry.’ She has been the perfect mate and made me a better person, and our life together has been wonderful. There are so many interesting things that have happened during our 30 years in the Corps from me getting home from Korea on Friday and the wedding being held on Sunday, to her trials and tribulations, our moves, two tours in Vietnam, a DI tour and three tours on recruiting duty. We have three great kids, Rick, Cheryl and Donna.”

SgtMaj Earl Davis, USMC (Ret)

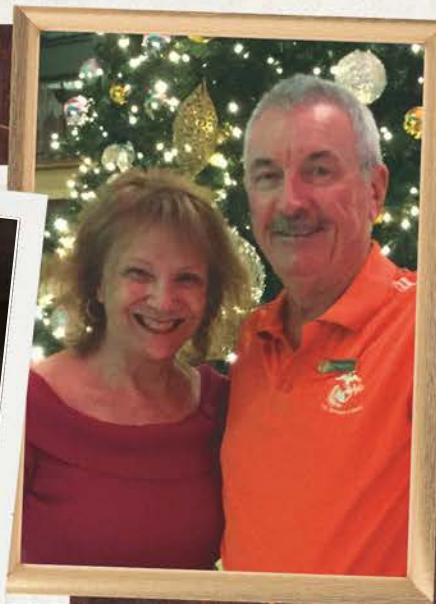
Lance Corporal and Mrs. Michael Doyle

Married March 1968—“Muguette and I met in 1966 in a burger joint. Within a few months we fell in love and married two years later. I served in the Marine Corps from 1967 to 1971. We were in North Carolina in the early years then duty called from foreign lands—Vietnam, Okinawa and Japan. The Corps has taught me how to deal with life’s trauma and situations. We have heeded my dad’s advice to us, ‘Never let the sun set on anger.’ We were blessed with a son and a daughter and two grandsons.”

LCpl Michael Doyle



March, 1968





First Sergeant and Mrs. Joseph Carretero, USMC (Ret)

June 11, 1982—“Jackie and I met in St. Louis, Mo., in 1980. We have had our share of ups and downs throughout the years and we can surely vouch for the fact that opposites really do attract. The secret to a long and happy marriage for us is, above all, work. You must work at it to reap the rewards and you must agree to disagree. In our case the fact that we have similar backgrounds and strong family foundations really helped us. Leaving on constant stateside and overseas deployments, training or weekend duties helped keep our marriage ‘fresh.’ My wife says that the toughest thing to deal with as a military wife was house repairs. She remembers one dreadful day when she had two tire flats, a severe water backup filling the basement with a foot and a half of raw sewage, and a leaking kitchen ceiling, and of course, I was deployed. We have two grown sons and are now blessed with a beautiful grandchild—our lives have been enriched.”

1stSgt Joseph Carretero, USMC (Ret)



Gunnery Sergeant Gabriel Atwin, USMC (Ret) and Corporal Sandra Atwin

Married Dec. 23, 1989—“Sandra and I grew up together in Kingsclear First Nation in New Brunswick, Canada, and started dating when I was in my senior year of high school and Sandra, a year ahead of me, was in college. Being together for so long, and always together, has been the ingredient of a successful marriage. Sandra served four years as a Marine and then went on to nursing school. We have three children, Jenna, Hunter and Gabe.”

GySgt Gabriel Atwin, USMC (Ret)



July 28, 1979



Commitment

Corporal and Mrs. Daniel Meeks

Married July 28, 1979—“I met Lori in Garden Grove, Calif., in 1978, while stationed at Camp Pendleton during Infantry Training School at San Onofre. I met her through James Bell, my high school best friend who enlisted with me on the buddy system. Lori was his cousin. A year later, James married my sister which makes he and Lori cousins and brother- and sister-in-law all in one. The key to a happy marriage? A promise to God, commitment, loyalty, and yes, honor and a lot of courage as we Marines are trained for. Marriage is for life. I made a commitment to be an honorable Marine as well as an honorable husband to my wife. Your wife learns the Marine Corps motto, the date of the Marine Corps Birthday and yes, who ‘Chesty’ Puller is. She may find ‘oorah’ a little odd, but she knows what it is.”

Cpl Daniel Meeks



Corporal and Mrs. Joseph Robinson

Married Oct. 22, 1955—“Lita and I met at the beach in Coney Island, N.Y. I went to her 16th birthday party and we kept in touch. Later, I joined the Marine Corps. After we were married, we lived off base in Opa Locka, Fla. The success of our marriage is due to our 50/50 partnership which has led us to a happy ever after. We have three beautiful daughters, Ellyn, Bari Ann, and Marla Sue who passed away in 1997.”

Cpl Joseph Robinson



Gunnery Sergeant and Mrs. Herbert A. Meader, USMC (Ret)

Married March 29, 1958—“I was a corporal stationed in London, England, as a Marine Security Guard in 1957. A couple of my buddies and I decided to go to the Festival of Britain Amusement Park. When we got there, we rode the bumper cars and I happened to see this girl on one of the cars, so I kept bumping my car into her car. When the ride was over, my buddies and I went to check out the other rides, so I didn’t even get her name. A couple hours later, we were leaving, and who should pass us? The girl on the bumper car and her friend. I handed her a statue I had won, and she took it, but accidentally dropped it. While picking up the pieces, we started talking and I learned her name was Valerie. Before she and her friend left, I made a date with her and many more after that. Eventually I asked her father for her hand and he gave us his blessing. We were married at St. Mary’s Church in Acton. We have three daughters, Tania Lea, Deborah Layne, and Kim Leilani, and six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. We stay active by bowling three times a week. I will be 82 years old on March 29.”

GySgt Herbert A. Meader, USMC (Ret)



Captain and Mrs. Vincent A. Sordello, USMC (Ret)

Married Sept. 9, 1951—“Elenor and I met in school in Boston, Mass., at 13 years of age. Looking back, I think we knew then what our destiny was. As we recall, there was no formal proposal. We knew if I survived Korea, we would marry upon my return, which we did.

The key to our long marriage started when she supported my desire to enlist in the Marine Corps and that support continued through every decision I made during my Marine Corps career and never wavered to this day. Through every deployment, Okinawa, Vietnam (two tours), etc., she never failed to write me a daily letter. Every Marine Corps Birthday she bakes me a cake from the original recipe published in *Leatherneck* in the November 1957 issue. She was, and is to this day, a proud Marine Corps wife. We have had many good years and adversities, but we were and are always each other’s rock. As I stand proud at every playing of ‘The Marines’ Hymn,’ so does Elenor, right there beside me.”

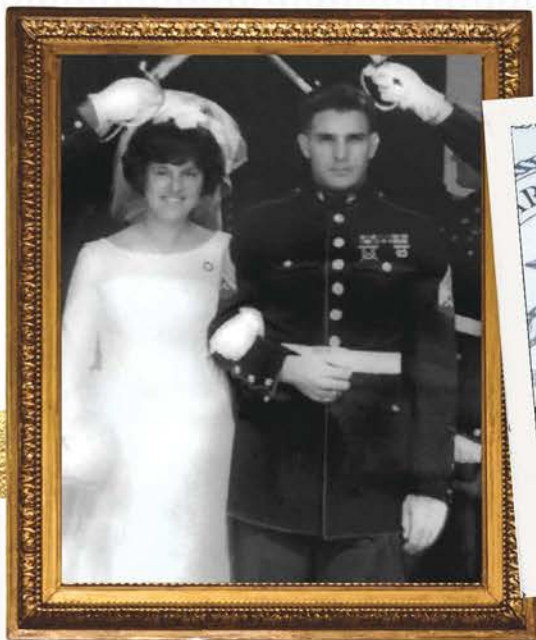
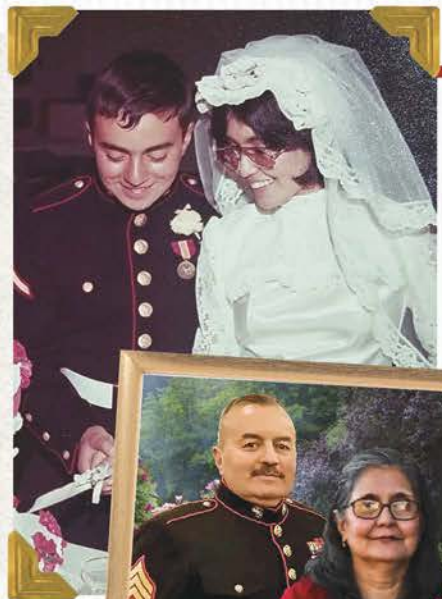
Capt Vincent A. Sordello, USMC (Ret)



**Gunnery Sergeant and Mrs. Steve Sanchez,
USMC (Ret)**

Married Dec. 21, 1974—“Our paths crossed many times as kids without notice. We grew up in the same church and were raised within 2 miles of each other. After two years in the same high school, while hanging out at a local park, fate, with a little help from our friends, set us on the same long journey together. Without a doubt, the isolation of our first duty station, Twentynine Palms, set the tone for a long and happy partnership. We were just kids living in a tiny mobile home minutes from the main gate. Our Marine Corps honeymoon allowed us to appreciate the simple pleasures in life while working on more complex issues that seem to come with marriage and the Marine Corps. Lucky for me, my wife’s father was a sergeant in the Marine Corps so as a little girl, Christine was introduced to the Corps, and marrying a Marine expanded her role in the Marine Corps family. We have a daughter, Lisa, and son-in-law, Rob. They have given us two grandchildren, Kaia and Gavin.”

GySgt Steve Sanchez, USMC (Ret)



Semper Fidelis



**Sergeant Paul and
Corporal Lynn Giardrone**

Married May 20, 1967—“Ours was a dream wedding at the chapel at MCRD San Diego, Calif. All the participants were in dress blues, except the bride, and we even had the crossed swords. My husband was a drill instructor at that time and his recruit series commander was Captain Charles C. Krulak, who became the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps. Life has been good to us. Fifty-three years later all is going well, and we have been blessed with good health, two sons and six grandchildren, three girls and three boys who are a sheer delight and full of life.”

Cpl Lynn Giardrone

**Sergeant Major Michael Wren, USMC
(Ret) and Gunnery Sergeant Carolyn
Wren, USMC (Ret)**

Married Dec. 19, 1977—“Michael and I met in February 1977, at Parris Island, S.C. It was love at first sight. On our second date, he asked me to marry him. We always supported each other as Marines and in raising our two sons, Billy and Jason. We are blessed with two wonderful grandsons, Peyton and Alexander. Today we are living our dream retirement in Kailua, Hawaii.”

GySgt Carolyn Wren, USMC (Ret)





**Captain Robert La Coursiere,
USMC (Ret) and Private First
Class Betty La Coursiere**

Married April 30, 1959—"We were both stationed at Parris Island, S.C., where we met at a field meet through friends. Bob, whose nickname was 'Frenchie,' was stationed in Paris, France, on embassy duty at one point in his Marine Corps career, and throughout our marriage, he always told me he was going to take me there some day. For our 30th wedding anniversary, Bob made good on his promise and we went to Paris. We have three daughters, Theresa, Margot and Michelle, and are blessed with six grandchildren."

PFC Betty La Coursiere



July 25, 1986

**Lance Corporal and
Mrs. Hugh Pratt**

Married July 25, 1986—"Nancy and I met at a bar in Jacksonville, N.C. She and a friend, both Pittsburgh natives, came to visit another friend stationed at Camp Lejeune. I was standing at the bar looking for an open seat. I saw one seat available, so I made a dash for it and Nancy happened to be sitting at the table. We struck up a conversation and I got her number. We dated between Pittsburgh, Pa., and Camp Johnson, N.C., using the pay phone located next to the enlisted club. We only saw each other four times before eloping after a long three-month engagement—her mother was not happy. Navy Chaplain Stalling married us, and we found out that we were the first wedding he officiated. We have a son, Maxwell, who was in the Corps from 2007 to 2011."

LCpl Hugh Pratt

**Mastery Gunnery Sergeant Angel Christian Jr., USMC (Ret)
and Hospital Corpsman 2 Mary Christian**

Married April 3, 1983—"We were married on Okinawa, Japan. The recent photo shows us at the Montford Point Association Marine Corps Birthday Ball in November 2019."

MyGySgt Angel Christian, USMC (Ret)



April 3, 1983



Sergeant and Mrs. Ken Braman

Married July 5, 1958—"As a young Marine sergeant, I was stationed at MCAS El Toro, Santa Ana, Calif., in 1958. I went with a group of Marines to a volleyball game sponsored by the local YWCA where I met a young lady who had just moved to California. Joann and I became friends and soon it was time for my discharge. When I told her that I would be leaving to return home, she cried and said she would never love again. I didn't realize we had become so attached to each other. We were wed and moved back to my home state of Ohio where we have lived for 62 years. We are blessed with two sons and five grandchildren."

Sgt Ken Braman

DPAA Identifies Tarawa Marines

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced the positive identification of three Marines who were killed in action (KIA) during the Battle of Tarawa.

Private First Class Jacob Cruz, 18, of Los Angeles, Calif., was assigned to Company D, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division when he landed on Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. He died on Nov. 22, 1943, the third day of the battle. He was posthumously awarded the Silver Star for his actions during the fighting.

PFC John P. Langan, 18, of Columbus, Neb., was assigned to Co C, 1st Bn, 6th Marines, 2ndMarDiv. He died on Nov. 22, 1943, the third day of the battle.

Private Howard E. Miller, 22, of San Mateo, Calif., was assigned to Co A, 1st Bn, 6th Marines, 2ndMarDiv. He died on the third day of the battle, Nov. 22, 1943.

All three Marines were reported to have been buried on Betio, after the battle ended, in Row D of the East Division Cemetery, later renamed Cemetery 33. In 1946, the 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company centralized the American remains found on Tarawa at the Lone Palm Cemetery for later repatriation; however, almost half of the known KIAs were never located and those men were declared unrecoverable.

In 2009, History Flight, a nonprofit Missing in Action recovery organization, located a burial site on Betio, believed to be Cemetery 33, which has since become the site of numerous excavations. In March 2019, excavations west of Cemetery 33 revealed a previously undiscovered burial site that has since been identified as Row D.

The remains were excavated and transferred to the DPAA laboratory at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, where scientists used dental and anthropological analysis as well as circumstantial and material evidence to identify the Marines. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used DNA analysis in the identification process.

DPAA

John P. Adamski, 88, of East Moline, Ill. He was a Marine who served during the Korean War. He later worked for the U.S. Forest Service and the Army Corps of Engineers.

LtCol Phillip T. Arman, 89, of Carson City, Nev. He enlisted after his high school graduation and spent 25 years in the Marine Corps. His career included two tours in Vietnam.

Cpl Desmond C. Baird, 23, in Temecula, Calif. He graduated from MCRD San Diego after his 2016 graduation from high school. He deployed in 2019 with the 3/5 "Dark Horse" Bn as part of the 11th MEU aboard USS *Boxer*.

Sgt Edward B. Becker, 75, in Kansas City, Mo. He enlisted in 1964 and served a tour in Vietnam in 1966-1967.

Capt Robert L. "Bob" Bowen, 79, of Spotsylvania, Va. He was a combat correspondent who was among the last active-duty Marines to serve on the staff of *Leatherneck* in the late 1960s. He enlisted in 1960 and was assigned to the Armed Forces Radio and Television

station on Okinawa before joining the staff of *Leatherneck*. While working for the magazine, he had multiple tours in Vietnam, and some of the photos he took there earned him the distinction of runner-up in the Military Photographer of the Year in 1967. He was then selected to attend a graduate-level program in photojournalism at Syracuse University where he graduated first in his class. He did another tour in Vietnam as a combat correspondent with 1stMarDiv before being promoted to warrant officer in 1970.

While serving as the chief of photojournalism instruction at the Defense Information School, he was selected for the Limited Duty Officer program and was promoted to first lieutenant. He retired from active duty in 1980 and had a second career as a public affairs officer and writer/editor with the State Department, the Justice Department and Voice of America.

Leatherneck recently republished some of Bob's photos and articles, and the November 2019 cover featured a photo

he took in 1969. In 2020 he wrote a piece for the September issue, "A Month in the Life of 2/26 in Vietnam."

He was a good friend to *Leatherneck* and at a moment's notice could be counted on to remember almost everything that was filed in the magazine's photo archives. He will be missed.

MSgt Harvey Coleman, 97, of Shawano, Wis. He was an Eagle Scout who was a recent high school graduate when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He enlisted in the Marine Corps and served in the Pacific, where he saw action on Guadalcanal and Bougainville.

Martin H. Donohoe III, 80, of Imperial Beach, Calif. He was a seagoing Marine who served aboard USS *Springfield* (CL-66). He later had a career with Eastman Kodak.

James L. "Les" Gadbury, 96, of Monticello, Ill. During WW II, he served with C/1/9, 3rdMarDiv and saw action on Guadalcanal, Bougainville, Guam and Iwo Jima.

Maj Michael L. Gilman, 76, of Chesapeake, Va. He was commissioned a second lieutenant after his 1966 graduation from Notre Dame. He retired from active duty in 1986.

Capt Robert S. Green, 78, of Delaware, Ohio. During the Vietnam War, he commanded an infantry company in country. He was a member of the MCL.

Cpl George Halsted, 88, of Salem, Ore. He served from 1950-1952 and was assigned to 1stMarDiv. He was a veteran of the Korean War and saw action at the Chosin Reservoir.

Russell K. Hanson, 95, of Anaheim, Calif. He enlisted when he was 17. He was assigned to the MarDet of USS *Maryland* (BB-46) and participated in numerous sea battles during WW II. After the war, he had a career in telecommunications and was responsible for overseeing the set-up of the telephone system at Disneyland when it was built.

CAPT William M. Hinz, 85, of Grafton, Wis. He enlisted in 1954 and served three years. He later attended college and medical school and served as a Navy medical officer. In Vietnam, he was a MedCap team leader conducting medical outreach.

James R. Innis, 85, of Orange County, Calif. He enlisted in 1952 and served until 1958. He was a veteran of the Korean War.

Col Denis J. "Deej" Kiely, 85, of Pensacola, Fla. He was a Marine fighter

pilot who flew the F-8 Crusader and the F-4 Phantom II. During his 30-year career, he accumulated more than 5,000 flying hours and flew 182 combat missions. While he was assigned to VMA(AW)-235 during the Vietnam War, he was the recipient of the Silver Star for his actions on March 16, 1968, when he was leading a flight of two Crusaders in a close air support mission for a Marine unit that was heavily engaged with the enemy near the DMZ. According to the award citation, “he fearlessly executed three low-level bombing and strafing runs, delivering his ordnance with unerring accuracy. Although he had expended all his ordnance, he then conducted a simulated strafing run upon the enemy soldiers, forcing them to seek cover and allowing the ground unit to move several casualties to covered positions.”

Other awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with 11 Strike/Flight Awards.

While he was the CO of VMFA-312 at MCAS Beaufort, S.C., the motion picture “The Great Santini” was being filmed there. Kiely not only served as a technical advisor to lead actor Robert Duvall, he also was the pilot in all the

flying sequences that depicted the movie’s main character. The movie poster for that movie and other Marine Corps-themed movies is on page 72, in Saved Round.

After his retirement, he was the membership and public relations director of the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation in Pensacola and was the senior editor of *Foundation* magazine.

Larry J. LaCombe, 71, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted after his 1968 high school graduation and served until 1971.

Cpl Thomas J. Lemme, 94, of Albany, N.Y. He was a veteran of WW II. He was wounded during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

Lt Rodney L. Oney, 77, of Oxford, Ohio. He was a Marine who served in Vietnam. He later had a successful two-decade career operating his own dental practice.

Ted H. Osborn, 74, of Rosedale, Ind. He was a Marine who served in Vietnam. He also served in the Navy.

Monroe S. Ozment, 94, of Virginia Beach, Va. He enlisted when he was 17 and served in the Pacific. He was wounded on Iwo Jima. He was a member of the 5thMarDiv Association.


Ambassador Peter Secchia, 83, of Grand Rapids, Mich. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1956 and served until 1959. He later graduated from Michigan

State University and had a successful career with Universal Forest Products where he started as a salesman and eventually took majority ownership of the company. He became active with the Republican Party in Michigan and was a friend and confidante to President Gerald Ford and President George H.W. Bush. In 1989, President Bush appointed him as the U.S. ambassador to Italy.

Mark Tatman, 64, of Urbana, Ill. He was a Marine who served from 1975-1978.

David Thatcher, 83, of Delaware, Ohio. He served in the Marine Corps Reserve and was a successful small-business owner.

1stSgt Leroy Thrasher Jr., 82, of Conyers, Ga. He had a 22-year career in the Marine Corps, retiring in 1978.

In Memoriam is run on a space-available basis. Those wishing to submit items should include full name, age, location at time of death (city and state), last grade held, dates of service, units served in, and, if possible a published obituary. Allow at least four months for the notice to appear. Submissions may be sent to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, Va., 22134, or emailed to leatherneck@mca-marines.org or n.lichtman@mca-marines.org. 

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SOUND OFF
[continued from page 7]

was told President Kennedy forbade those photos, so I notified the Smithsonian that I had photos and offered to share them which I did. They published them in a blog as, "Never before seen photos from boots on the ground."

My fondest memory of those dark days was on board USS *Bexar* (APA-237) navigating through the Panama Canal at night. The Navy showed a movie which just happened to be, "The Girl from Jones Beach," starring Ronald Reagan. I let all Marines know that is where I used to work prior to joining the Corps.

Bill Ober
Huntington, N.Y.

Sea Story Renews Reader's "Healthy Respect" for Snakes

In response to "Snakes Creep Me Out" [Sea Stories] in the December 2020 issue by Captain R.D. Ramsay, USMC, I also have both a fear and healthy respect for snakes. I was born and raised in Hawaii where there are no snakes, but as a young lance corporal in Quang Tri Province in 1966, assigned to "Golf" Battery, 3/12, I had heard the stories about the deadly krait. I did not see one until one day after

monsoon waters ran through our "GP" tent.

Our wood and canvas cots were set on wooden pallets mainly for the purpose of keeping our gear dry and out of the mud. Sometimes it worked and sometimes, not so much. On this one beautiful summer day, I was laying on my cot resting between fire missions. It was then that I heard someone say, "Allen, don't move!" Before he could say "snake," I was up and over two or three cots without touching the ground as I recall. My good comrade then took his M14 and killed my "would-be assassin." When I saw it laying there, I was no longer able to say that I never saw a snake.

One other day, I was moving some 105 ammo tubes. Upon lifting two of the tubes that housed our ammo, I saw a snake shoot between my legs toward some bushes. Needless to say, that was it for me. I would look under, over and around everything before moving anything. Luckily, those were my only two "snake" experiences—two too many for me. I still have no desire to see snakes in any shape, size or form. I'm with you, Capt Ramsay, in that they still creep me out too.

Sgt John H. Allen
USMC, 1965-1974
Fountain Valley, Calif.

In My Closet

This was written about my two step-fathers who served in different branches of the military.

Through the years much has changed. Years apart my stepfathers were taken by cancer.

My mind's closet is full of their memories.

It's filled with their yelling, their kind words.

It's filled with their uniforms.

To the right is his Sailor's hat on a shelf.

Below is his white uniform and shoes.

His daily uniform he wore on deck so worn.

He spoke of the battleship USS *Sims*.

He mentioned the long hours below deck.

As I turn, tears crest my eyes.

There in the center is two folded flags.

To the left on the shelf is a Marine's hat.

Below is his green uniform and boots.

His dress blues he wore so clean.


He only spoke of driving a truck of troops.

The rest of Vietnam was silent to my ears.

They battled with the war from within.

One uniform at a time I try on.

Though the mirror remains clear.



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SEP 9-14

Battle of Midway Return

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Their shoes and boots stay in the closet.
For I cannot walk in their steps.
I open my crying eyes.
I feel as if they're watching over me.
Days I long for their advice.
So, I close my eyes tightly.
There they are in my mind's closet with
open arms.

James Schmidt
Waupun, Wis.

I Am Marine

I retired from the Marine Corps in 2007, and still work today as a civil service employee. I have been reading *Leatherneck* magazine since high school.

When I attended the Career Course in 2004, my paper was up for the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Writing Award. At one time I posted articles to the *Globe* in Camp Lejeune. My main love is writing Christian-based poems, but I figured it was time to write one for the branch of service I've been involved with for 35 years.

I'm a United States Marine! But for what does that stand?

Being loyal both here and abroad, fighting on that of foreign lands.

"M" stands for Member on the greatest of all teams,

I'm polished to strict perfection; my uniform shall always so gleam.

"A" is for Allegiance to all, for united we will always be,

Honor, courage and commitment is a daily task never difficult for me.

"R" is for the Red blood spilled afar, throughout sandy beaches and shores,

For amphibious landings we've trampled thus, the life of the Marine Corps.

"I" am part of a winning team that knows no part of losing,

It's my honor to be the greatest for its of my own desire and choosing.

"N" is for my Nation I'll defend, pushing myself to the limit is a must,

For America I'll fight for her proudly, in the Stars and Stripes I will trust.

"E" is for the most Elite of those who will truly adorn,

From the ashes of recruit training a United States Marine is born.

Our motto is plain and simple; for us it's always either do or die. As we faithfully serve fellow Americans, peace to you all and Semper Fi!

Mike Black
Jacksonville, N.C.

Rainy Day at Parris Island

Our platoon came to life with the sound of a stick beating an ad hoc reveille inside

a 24-gallon galvanized trash can. I don't recall if the can ever felt the gritty touch of Brasso, but I'll take a chance and say yes. The entire squad bay and everything in it had the veneer of recruit polishing, soap 'n suds and scrubbing.

Reveille was effective. We were up and ready to go with sheets in hands before you could say "Chesty" Puller. The duty DI bid his ladies a hard, "Rise and shine maggots," in a way that only a Marine Corps DI can do and announced that we were privileged that morning to do a little rifle PT before morning chow. It was raining to beat the band. We made up our racks, dressed in ponchos, and walked down the ladder away from the third deck to an area between the 3rd Battalion barracks.

Our junior DI, while still on the third deck, called to the platoon to fall in. "Platoon." "Yes, Sir." "Big end towards the mess hall." "Aye, aye, Sir." That's all he yelled. He probably was teaching us "pilgrims" to work together in silence as a unit as Marines without someone on your back constantly. We formed up perfectly and off we marched. To this day, I remember the cold drumbeat of the rain. Googling the 3rd Battalion area, I saw there was a parade deck in front of the 3rd Bn headquarters. That was our



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destination. The platoon double-timed around the deck a few times then formed up for M1 rifle PT. It was now raining like the hammers of hell. The junior DI led us in the exercise. He had a rifle. I found out later that the platoon's house mouse did not join us. He was back in the squad bay squaring away the DI quarters. The DI with us in the rain had the house mouse's M1. The house mouse probably thought he lucked out by not going out in the downpour. He still had to "square away" his piece after it went through a drenching South Carolina monsoon and continued to pull duty as the drill instructors' gofer. The house mouse would emerge from boot camp with a stripe. How does one explain to the girls back home that you earned private first class at Parris Island by shining boots, changing sheets and making coffee?

We finished rifle PT and returned to the barracks on the run. When hanging my piece on a knob on my upper bunk, I noticed my stacking swivel was missing. Up to that point in life nothing added up to this catastrophe. It was the end of the world as I knew it. I immediately and sacrificially reported to the DI and was told without even an unceremonious glance toward this recruit that, number one, it wasn't *my* stacking swivel. And

that it belonged to the President and he lent it to the Corps, and I let the nation down by losing it. The DI also got my 11 "General Orders" involved in his tirade. My thoughts were, "Oh my God, what did I do? I am the lowest thing in the ocean." The senior DI went on saying that if I didn't hurry my lazy butt, I would make the platoon miss morning chow and what was I waiting for an engraved invitation from the Commandant? "Go find it," he said. I tore down the ladderway and after a few times around the perimeter, I found it. I had chalked up several "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys" on the way from the third deck of the barracks to the field. I thanked God for my good fortune on my run back.

Weeks passed and we were ready to graduate. Our three DIs took us for a final run. Well, someone else lost his stacking swivel. NOT ME! Returning to the squad bay, he reported to the DI that he had lost his stacking swivel. No big deal. The DI went into a desk drawer and pulled out a cigar box which contained more parts to a M1 Garand than I could eat in a week. Oh well, it must have been the rain. Carry on, Marine!

Cpl Robert L. Ellis
USMC, 1960-1964
North Cape May, N.J.

Editorial Irish Pennants

In our article "Chosin Reservoir Campaign Battle Perspectives from Marines Who Were There" in our December 2020 issue, there were several mistakes. The campaign took place in late November 1950, not late December as the article indicates and 14 vice 42 Marines received the Medal of Honor for heroic actions at the Chosin Reservoir. In addition, Missing in Action estimates were more than 500 vice the 193 listed in the article. We regret the errors.

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

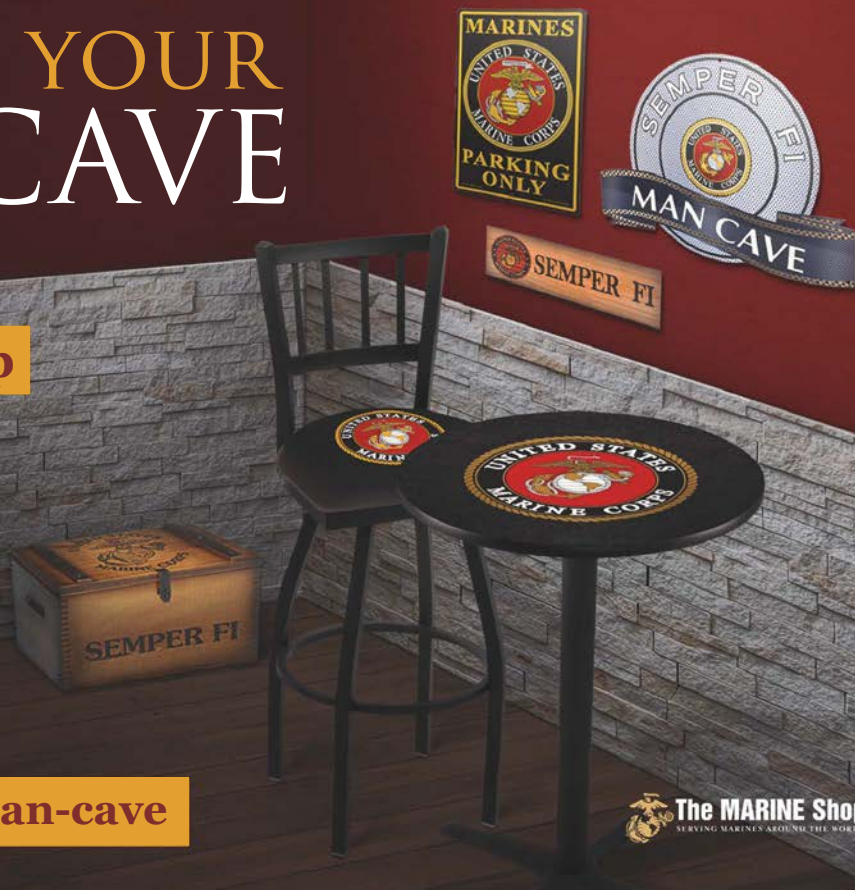
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Reunions

Editor's note: The following reunion information was current as of Jan. 1. Given that things are rapidly changing due to the spread of the COVID-19 virus, please continue to check with the reunion points of contact for the most up-to-date information.

• **Marine Corps Engineer Assn.**, Sept. 23-25, Fredericksburg, Va. Contact Maj Charlie Dismore, USMC (Ret), (512) 394-9333, www.marcorengasn.org.

• **Marine Corps Cryptologic Assn.** is planning a reunion in September, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Edgar Kitt, 2250 Heavenly View Dr., Henderson, NV 89014, (702) 454-1646, edgarkitt@earthlink.net.

• **Marine Corps Disbursing Assn.**, Aug. 8-12, Reno, Nev. Contact MGySgt Kevin Gascon, USMC (Ret), (760) 458-2655, mojorisin68@hotmail.com, www.usmcdisbursers.com.

• **Marine Air Traffic Control Assn.**, Sept. 19-26, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Steve Harris, (509) 499-8137, sandkh2@gmail.com.

• **11th Marine Regiment, OIF (20th anniversary)**, March 31-April 1, 2023, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Contact Casey Harsh, casey.harsh@gmail.com. Facebook group: The Cannon Cockers of OIF-1 (20-Year Reunion 2023 Group).

• **STA Plt, 2/8 (1989-1993)** is planning a reunion. Contact Mike Moriarty, mmoriarty81@comcast.net.

• **1/27 (1968)** is planning a reunion

in July, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Felix Salmeron, (469) 583-0191, mar463@aol.com.

• **“Stormy’s” 3/3**, Sept. 27-30, Branson, Mo. Contact Burrell Landes, (303) 734-1458, bhanon@comcast.net, www.stormys33.com.

• **Battery Adjust, 3/11 (all eras)**, Aug. 25-29, Washington, D.C. Contact Brian Seals, (765) 580-2734, bseals2013@gmail.com.

• **C/1/12 (RVN)**, Aug. 25-29, Washington, D.C. Contact Woody Hall, (931) 242-8432, hwoodrow@charter.net.

• **H/2/7 (RVN, 1965-1970)**, June 24-27, Jacksonville, Fla. Contact Steve Cone, (843) 424-8279, scone1948@yahoo.com.

• **Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan, Task Force Leatherneck (2009-2010)**, May 7-9, Quantico, Va. Contact reunion committee, taskforceleatherneck@gmail.com.

• **Philippine Embassy Marines (1976-1977)**, Nov. 10, North Carolina. Contact Tim Craig, phildream2017@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Co F, 6-70**, Oct. 21-24, Quantico, Va. Contact Col Tom Kanasky, USMC (Ret), (202) 366-3156, tlkanasky@earthlink.net, or Col Mitch Youngs, USMC (Ret), (703) 493-9435, mitchyoungs@verizon.net.

• **TBS, Co C, 3-72**, is planning a 50th-anniversary reunion. Contact Col Joe Mueller, USMCR (Ret), (818) 815-8331, jnm21213@yahoo.com.

• **TBS, Co D, 4-73**, is planning a 50th-anniversary reunion in 2023, Quantico, Va. Contact Col Bill Anderson, USMCR

(Ret), (540) 850-4213, binche57@yahoo.com, or Col Bob Donaghue, USMCR (Ret), (614) 840-0267, ip350haven@comcast.net.

• **Plt 1187, San Diego, 1969**, is planning a reunion. Contact T.E. Miller, (618) 520-9646, or Mark Elder, (314) 322-8516.

• **Plt 2057, San Diego, 1971**, is planning a reunion. Contact K.L. Christeson, (816) 830-1498.

• **Plt 3028, San Diego, 1966**, is planning a reunion. Contact MSgt Bob Rees, USMC (Ret), (619) 940-9218, bobrees86@gmail.com.

• **USMC A-4 Skyhawkers**, Oct. 21-24, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Mark Williams, 10432 Button Willow Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89134, (425) 327-6050, usmcskyhawker21@gmail.com.

• **VMFA-115**, May 6-9, Pensacola, Fla. Contact Patti Kaas, (717) 422-6796, kaasfamily4@gmail.com, <https://115marinereunion.com>.

Ships and Others

• **USS Hornet and USS Essex (CV-8, CV/CVA/CVS-12) and (CV/CVA/CVS-9, LHD-2)**, Sept. 13-18, San Diego, Calif. *Hornet* contact Sandy Burket, P.O. Box 108, Roaring Spring, PA 16673, (814) 224-5063, (814) 312-4976, hornetcva@aol.com. *Essex* contact Tom Ferelli, 19808 N 43rd Ln., Glendale, AZ 85308, (602) 882-0375, tferelli@gmail.com.

Mail Call

• Mark Pacey, markp@library.mstn.govt.nz, to hear from anyone who has **photographs or stories** from the **3rd or 4th Defense Battalions’** stay in **Masterson, New Zealand**, during **1943**. He is a military historian in New Zealand who is writing a book.

• Johnnie L. Nelson, 8423 Bahama Ct., Fort Myers, FL 33907, to hear from anyone who served with **Co B “Battling Bravo,” 1st Motor Transport Bn, MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., 1958-1962**.

Entries for “Reader Assistance,” which include “Reunions,” “Mail Call,” “Wanted” and “Sales, Trades and Giveaways,” are free and printed on a space-available basis. *Leatherneck* reserves the right to edit or reject any submission. Allow two to three months for publication. Send your email to s.bock@mca-marines.org, or write to Reader Assistance Editor, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134. 🐻



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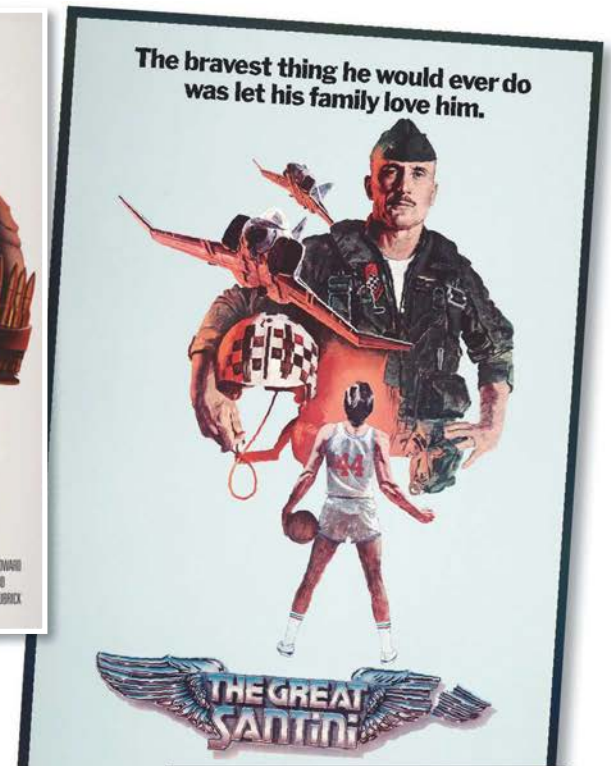
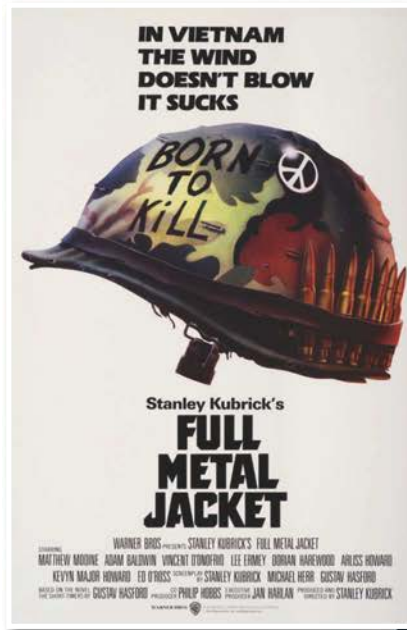
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MARINES IN THE MOVIES—Movies have long been a popular medium of entertainment with a genre for seemingly every interest. Moreover, they can be a powerful tool for shaping public opinion about war and warfighters. Indeed, some of our most popular mental images of war may be fictional products of the cinema. Marines have been featured frequently on the silver screen in films that reflect much about the cultural sentiments of the society and the times in which they were produced.

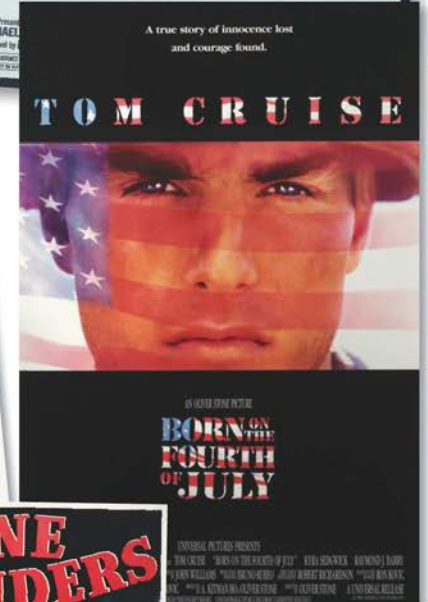
The art of movie-making and how movies are shown to audiences has changed over time. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on how Americans view movies today; most theaters have been closed since March 2020, and people watch movies on TV from the comfort of their homes.

Movie posters in theater lobbies and box offices had been one of the true constants that have endured relatively unchanged, at least while people were still able to see the newest box office hits in front of the big screen. These artistic signboards were created to entice moviegoers to see a particular film. Posters advertising movies that feature Marines have also collectively crafted a strong impression of the Corps as an elite organization ready to answer the nation's call to service.

These posters from the National Museum of the Marine Corps' Cultural and Material History Collection provide a glimpse of how Marines were portrayed in American popular culture from circa 1920 to the present. The pictures, graphics and words illustrate the movies themselves but are also a reflection of the changes in American culture over the years. It will be interesting to see in the post-pandemic world if movies and their posters continue to do so or become yet another example of "the good old days."

Editor's note: All posters courtesy of National Museum of the Marine Corps.

Author's bio: Jennifer Castro is the Cultural and Material History Curator for the National Museum of the Marine Corps.



Movies about the Corps often include Marines as technical advisors and even extras. GySgt R. Lee Ermey became famous for his role in "Full Metal Jacket," and in "The Great Santini" the aerial sequences were flown by the Marine aviators of VMFA-312.

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