

MARCH 2021

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

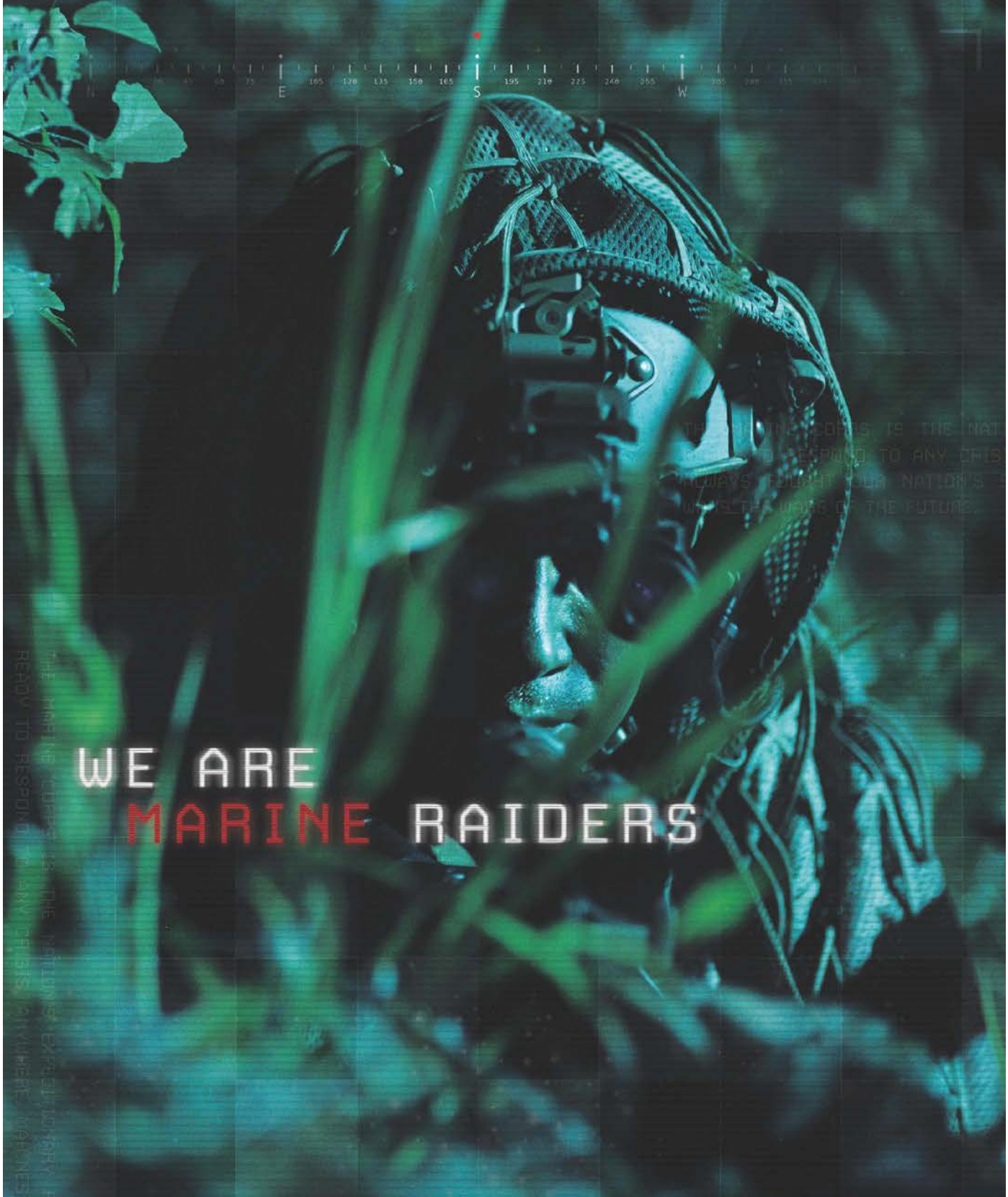
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MARCH 2021
VOL. 104, No. 3

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24 The Advisors *By Sgt Ray Wolf, USMC* This article from the *Leatherneck* archives details the role of Marine advisors who worked closely with their Vietnamese counterparts. The Marines learned the Vietnamese language and customs in order to assist the allies in fighting a determined foe.

30 Social Media ... Passing the Word in the 21st Century *By Col Mary H. Reinwald, USMC (Ret)* While in recent years social media has come under criticism for promoting negativity and false information, many Marine Corps-affiliated social media accounts, both official and unofficial, have become effective means by which information is passed and Marines and their families stay connected.

36 “Survivors Helping Survivors Heal”: TAPS Provides Peer Support, Resources and Comfort in Tragedy *By Sara W. Bock* Since 1994, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) has provided 24/7 support to all those grieving the death of a military loved one, regardless of the cause of death or their relationship to the deceased. Part Two in a two-part series tells the story of the inception of TAPS, the “gaps” the organization fills and how survivors have benefited from its programs and services.

48 Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools: Master Instructors and Staff Development Programs Take Instruction to the Next Level *By John Lathers* Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools manages a Master Instructor Program that certifies hundreds of instructors and provides collegiate-level training to thousands of faculty and staff to encourage professional growth, immediate competency, and career progression.

60 Apamama: A Model Operation in Miniature *By Sgt Frank X. Tolbert, USMC* This article from the *Leatherneck* archives tells how three platoons of the Recon Bn captured the outpost atoll of Apamama in the southern Gilberts during November 1943.



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COVER: Marine Corps social media accounts are used to show Marines throughout the Corps engaged in operations at sea (photo by Cpl Tawanya Norwood, USMC), volunteering removing wreaths from Arlington National Cemetery (photo by LCpl Morgan R.L. Burgess, USMC) and engaged in All-Marine wrestling matches (photo by LCpl Christian Ayers, USMC). Photo by LCpl Shane Beaubien, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$2 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

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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.)

Reading "Football Phenoms: Corps Has Fielded Gridiron Greats" in the November 2020 issue I saw no mention of the collegiate football greats who entered the Marine Corps through the V-12 program. Those who joined through this program were sent to colleges around the country for academic study and then to officer training to fill the need for platoon leaders. "Third Down and a War to Go," by Terry Frei, published by Wisconsin Historical Society Press in 2007, tells of the 1942 Wisconsin football team responding to war.

My story begins 75 years ago on Nov. 25, 1945. On that date, the El Toro Marines played the Fort Warren (Wyoming) Broncos in the second annual Bond Bowl at the old Denver University Stadium. The Rocky Mountain News described the game as "an attraction that is certain to attract the

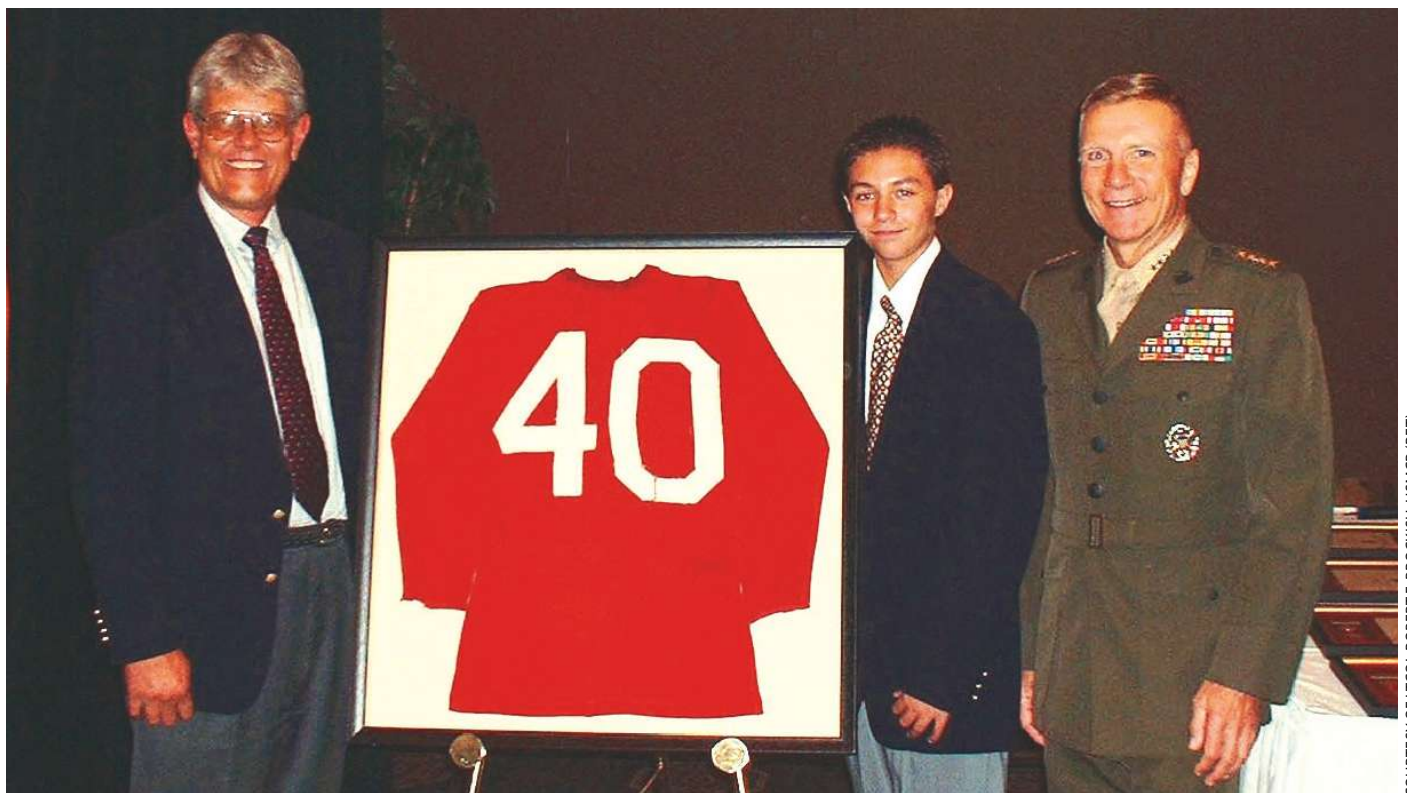
largest crowd of the year in the Rocky Mountain area." The next day the sports page headline read, "Hirsch, Governali Lead El Toro to 40-7 Victory." The crowd of 20,000 to 25,000 didn't exceed the 28,000-plus attendance record but it was a good turnout on a perfect day. During the game, Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch had his tear-away jersey ripped off as he ran down the sidelines. Like many other Denver boys, I was there that day to see this Marine, who had been named All-American at Wisconsin in 1942 and at Michigan in 1943, work his magic with the football.

The following spring, our junior high was participating in a savings bond drive. The school held an auction to encourage the sale of savings bonds and stamps. Realizing that my friend and I didn't have enough coupons to buy anything at the auction we figured that a lot of other kids didn't have enough either. We set out to convince our classmates that since they didn't have enough coupons to make a successful bid, they should give their coupons to us. We gathered up a pile of savings stamp coupons from the other

kids. We were surprised when Crazy Legs' Number 40 El Toro jersey showed up for sale at the auction. Fortunately, we made the winning bid for this treasure. After my mom sewed up the tear, my friend and I took turns wearing the jersey to school. How proud we were of that jersey.

After leaving junior high, Hirsch's jersey was stashed away. After graduation from high school in 1949, I entered the Marine Corps, served in Korea and in 1974 retired from the Marine Corps Reserve. During all those years, the jersey was in my footlocker.

Crazy Legs Hirsch died in January 2004. In the spring of 2005, I read that Hirsch was to be inducted into the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame at Quantico, Va. This seemed like an opportune time to bring out this prized souvenir and get it to a place where it could be seen by others. When I contacted the Marine Corps Semper Fit program, they invited me to come to Quantico and present it to the National Museum of the Marine Corps at the Hall of Fame induction ceremony. The ceremony was hosted by General Michael W. Hagee, 33rd Commandant



COURTESY OF LTCOL ROBERT F. BROCKISH, USMCR (RET)

Elroy "Crazy Legs" Hirsch's El Toro football jersey was purchased by Robert Brockish at an auction when Brockish was in junior high school. Hirsch was inducted into the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame at Quantico, Va., on July 29, 2005, and the jersey was presented to the National Museum of the Marine Corps during the induction ceremony. Left to right: Win Hirsch, son of Elroy Hirsch; Jonathan Hirsch, grandson of Hirsch; and the 33rd Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen Michael W. Hagee.

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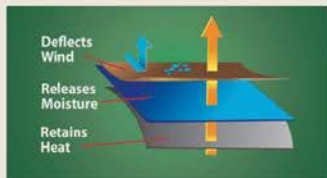
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of the Marine Corps. The museum staff had me send the jersey in advance so they could have it properly framed before the presentation. On July 29, 2005, I presented the jersey to the Commandant in the presence of Win and Jonathan Hirsch, Crazy Legs' son and grandson. It was a perfect answer to what to do with the prized jersey.

Thanks for a great magazine filled with stories of Marines past and present. Semper fi!

LtCol Robert F. Brockish, USMCR(Ret)
Louisville, Colo.

Readers Add to List of Gridiron Greats

It was with much interest that I read the article, "Football Phenoms: Corps Has Fielded Gridiron Greats" in the November 2020 issue of *Leatherneck*. I was extremely interested with the piece about Lieutenant General Ernie Cheatham. I had the privilege to serve under him in the late 1950s. He was my company commander in 1st Recon Bn.

I have been coaching track and field in Illinois for the past 55 years and in that time, I have had five state championship teams and more than 60 individual state championships. I was inducted into the Illinois Track and Cross-Country Coaches Hall of Fame in 1990. Much of my success comes from the leadership qualities I learned in the Marine Corps, especially those learned under Captain Cheatham. Sometime during my time in the Marine Corps, I learned the following: If you want leadership, be a leader. If you want fitness, be fit. If you want enthusiasm, be enthusiastic. If you want dedication, be dedicated. If you want respect, be respectful.

These principles have guided me throughout my teaching and coaching career. By the way, at 82 years of age I am still coaching and enjoy working with athletes as much as I ever have.

Jim C. West
Carbondale, Ill.

Somehow, I missed the story, "Football Phenoms: Corps has Fielded Gridiron Greats," in the November 2020 issue of *Leatherneck* so I don't know if Ed Kasky's name was among the 11 Marines who played football before his Marine Corps service. (*Editor's note: Ed Kasky was not included in the original story.*) Ed played for Villanova, then the Philadelphia Eagles. He served with the 1st Bn, 27th Marine Regiment, 5th Marine Division as a first lieutenant under Lieutenant Colonel John Butler on Iwo Jima.

Walter P. O'Malley
Clinton, Mass.

Remembering LtGen Stackpole

Having read the Sound Off Letter of the Month by Major James L. Murphy, USMC (Ret) in the January issue of *Leatherneck*, I was reminded of my first meeting with Hank Stackpole. A bunch of us salty first lieutenants were sitting in the 1st Pioneer Battalion mess hall at Camp Telega, Camp Pendleton, Calif., when a fellow first lieutenant came up and said, "There's a new second lieutenant reporting into the battalion who looks like a movie star." We found this very difficult to believe since it was common knowledge that all the good looking second lieutenants got an infantry or artillery MOS, and the rest of us, the plain-looking, the funny-looking or the just plain ugly second lieutenants got a supporting arms MOS such as engineers, tanks, amtracs, motor transport, communications, etc. We trooped down to the adjutant's office to see this rarity. Sure enough, standing there was a "butter bar" who in fact did look like a movie star. We asked him his name and where he went to college. He stated Princeton, which astonished us because all the engineer officers we knew were from state universities or Catholic universities. Hank fit in well with us, a bunch of crude, unsophisticated, dirty finger-nailed, plain-looking (at best) engineer lieutenants and was thought of by all of us as a number one guy.

The next time I saw him was when he visited me at my engineer company in Dong Ha in 1968. I was astonished to see him since I'd heard about his serious wounding. After being hospitalized in Okinawa, he got back to Vietnam with the Marine Corps correspondents' group in Saigon and it was his job to escort female reporters to Marine units in Vietnam. The Marine Corps found good use for his movie-star looks, great personality and his attention to duty. He deserved all his promotions up to commanding Fleet Marine Force Pacific. The Marine Corps and the country lost a great man last year and all of us who knew him will miss him. RIP Hank Stackpole.

LtCol Nelson Olf, USMC (Ret)
Forest Grove, Ore.

Reader Sheds Light on Crow's Nest

The article, "Crow's Nest" by SSGT Jim Elliott in the January issue from the January 1971 archives, brought back a flood of memories. In the late spring of 1966, as a young major, I was serving as S-3 of the 11th Marines commanded by Colonel Glenn Norris, when two of the Army's 23-inch Xeon searchlights were assigned to us. Where to put them was the question. Considering all their capabilities, Crow's Nest was suggested.

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Col Norris explained that he was the colonel, and I was the major, thus, I should climb up to the top of Crow's Nest and check it out as a possible site.

SSgt Elliott's story tells the tale of the steep climb and situation on top. We had the searchlight lifted after some engineer helped in preparing the site. The infrared capability opened up the night for the infantry battalion in that area and the site was a key player in our rapid response to rocket attacks. As the story reveals, life on Crow's Nest was a challenge and the men there were up to it.

A couple more climbs up and down Crow's Nest was enough for me. I did not know how much that site was improved and used before reading SSgt Elliott's story. I really enjoyed the aerial views. Thank you for reaching back and sharing this story. Keep up the great work.

LtCol George E. Jones, USMC (Ret)
Madison, Miss.

Loss of Our Tanks

Where is the outrage over the loss of our tanks? What is next? Artillery, the air wing? Why not contract out the functions of S-1, S-2, S-3 and S-4? I'm sure McDonald's or Burger King would be happy to take over the mess functions. We seem to be on a path that will lead our beloved Marine Corps to a status of

not much more than a glorified SWAT team or as some of the post-World War II politicians wanted—just the U.S. Navy police force.

We need a "hue and cry" from current and former Marines and worldwide Marine organizations to petition the powers that be to reverse this dangerous trend before it's too late. Let's let our voices be heard loud and clear.

Capt Louis P. Masucci, USMCR (Ret)
Seminole, Fla.

Responding to an IED Blast

The January issue had a book excerpt, "Responding to an IED Blast," by Miles Vining and Kevin Schranz, on 1/9, "The Walking Dead." I served with H&S Co, 1/9 in 1979 to 1981 as a field radio operator for "Bravo" Co. I plan to get their book, "Into Helmand With the Walking Dead." Nancy Lichtman's interview with the author of the book was well-written.

The Walking Dead was so ingrained in me that I had it tattooed on my shoulder.

Randy Hanish
Park Falls, Wis.

How Some Marines Ended Up In the Corps

After reading the Sound Off letters, "Luckily, the Air Force Recruiter was Out to Lunch," in the October 2020

Leatherneck and "My Intention was to Enlist in the Navy," in the December 2020 issue, it reminded me of a friend of mine. He went to the Air Force recruiter who told him they would send him to mechanic school, and when he got out, he could get a job with an airline. He went to the Army recruiter who told him they would send him to jump school and then send him to Germany rather than Vietnam. He went to the Marine recruiter who told him that in six months he would be in Vietnam with a 50/50 chance of coming home in a body bag. He joined the Corps because he thought the Marine was the only recruiter who was telling him the truth.

Cpl Rich Basile
USMC, 1957-1960
Belvidere, N.J.

Hollywood Marine

This is in response to Sgt John H. Allen's Sound Off letter titled, "Graduation Spectators" in the January issue. My Honor Platoon, Plt 352, graduated from MCRD San Diego in October 1965. My platoon was part of the 349 series which was formed up for training in mid-July 1965. We were the last series to complete the 11-week training cycle. The training cycle was reduced to eight weeks in order to expedite manpower needs for Vietnam.

[continued on page 68]



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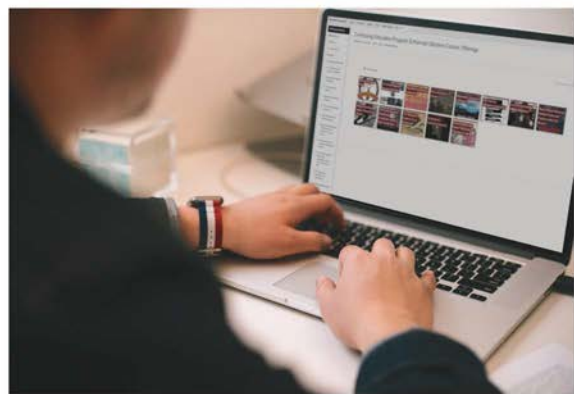
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IN SUBTERRANEAN WARFARE, PREPARATION AND BREATHING PROTECTION IS ESSENTIAL

In the early days of the Afghan War, US Forces discovered a cave system they thought might take a day to clear. Nine days later, they had searched 70 reinforced tunnels – housing 60 structures including a mosque, repair shops, a medical facility, and a communications center.¹

Operating in subterranean environments – be they natural caves, urban tunnel systems, or full-scale military bases large enough to launch aircraft – are hardly new in warfare. They've been known to exist in North Korea, Vietnam, Russia and Syria. During the American Civil War, Union forces dug sabotage tunnels beneath Confederate lines and detonated large amounts of gunpowder.² Subterranean landscapes vary in complexity and capability. These variables can alter the nature of the threat to US troops.

In a 2019 article for Military Times, Todd South describes these underground battlefields this way:

"It is darkness like you've never seen. The air you breathe could kill you in moments. All of your fire support – air, armor, artillery – is useless. The walls and ceiling could collapse. Communications will fail. A wrong turn leaves you utterly alone."

The US Army SUB-T manual (ATP 3-21.51) identifies atmospheric hazards as the number one risk to Sub-T operations. Likewise, the USMC version of the MOUT manual (MCWP 3-35.3, Appendix E, pg 298) includes some limited details about the atmospheric threats.

As the probability of subterranean warfare grows, it becomes increasingly critical that our troops are prepared to handle the physical and psychological challenges of underground battlefields – some of which could encompass the entire underbelly of a large metropolitan city.

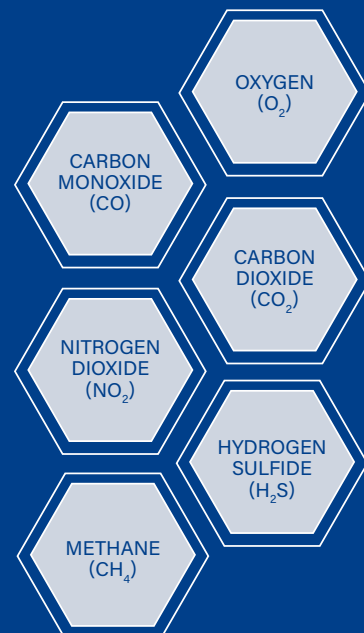
Physical obstacles can include a confusing maze of tunnels, dangerous debris, extreme temperature shifts, and disorienting darkness. But perhaps the most fundamental issue – both physical and psychological – is the potential for naturally occurring threats to air quality that can impact a Sub-T tactical force's survivability.

By David Mayfield
Defense & Security
Segment Lead
Draeger

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TOXIC THREATS TO TROOPS AROUND UNDERGROUND

The most common toxic gases encountered underground are carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, and methane. Some of these gases displace oxygen, making it difficult to breathe. Others are lethal in high concentrations and still others become combustible under certain conditions.



Dräger

OUR TROOPS CAN'T FIGHT IF THEY CAN'T BREATHE

Today, subterranean training is essential. Necessary training includes instructing force's on how to maintain a clean air supply and how to detect potentially deadly toxic threats underground. The U.S. military is now drawing on over a hundred years of Draeger's advancements in underground mining operations and rescue equipment for training. Training includes becoming accustomed to wearing advanced personal protective equipment (PPE) and learning how to use portable gas detection monitors.

Units operating underground should also be equipped with portable gas detection monitors. Real-time monitoring of air quality helps troops identify and address atmospheric threats and determine when protective breathing equipment might be needed. Portable gas detection monitors, such as the Dräger X-am® 8000, can detect the most commonly occurring toxic and explosive gases and vapors, so they can help Sub-T tactical force's detect, avoid, and mitigate risks posed by underground hazards.

Dräger X-am® 8000 pictured here, which can simultaneously detect seven gases, including toxic and flammable gases/vapors and oxygen levels.



Being equipped with the proper protective breathing apparatus and monitoring devices can provide increased physical protection and confidence as troops traverse increasingly precarious subterranean settings.

A Sub-T tactical force's PPE should include breathing protection equipment, like the Dräger PSS® BG 4 Plus, to ensure a clean, safe air supply.



In addition to head protection, gloves and goggles, subterranean PPE should include breathing protection equipment, such as closed circuit rebreathers. Dräger, a leading manufacturer of breathing and safety technology and the inventor of the world's first SCBA in 1912, outfits military units with its Dräger PSS® BG 4 Plus. The slight positive pressure breathing circuit protects the wearer by preventing hazardous substances from entering the sealed breathing system. Moreover, a CO₂ absorber removes carbon dioxide from the exhaled air, while at the same time an oxygen supply enriches the breathing air.

1. www.militarytimes.com; Subterranean Battlefield: Warfare is Going Underground, into Dark, Tight Spaces; Todd South, February 26, 2019

2. <https://armypubs.army.mil>; Subterranean Operations; Headquarters, Department of the Army; November 2019

In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

NIIGATA PREFECTURE, JAPAN Forest Light: Marines, JGSDF Seize and Defend

With MV-22 Ospreys and CH-47 aircraft operating overhead, U.S. Marines with 3rd Marine Division and Japanese soldiers with the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force manned machine guns, managed interlinked sensor screens and provided targeting information for long-range fires in preparation to defend against an amphibious assault and enable a fast-hitting counterattack into enemy-held territory.

The soaring mountains, chilling snow and thick mud of northwest Niigata Prefecture, Japan, acted as the backdrop during Exercise Forest Light Eastern Army, the latest iteration of the long-running bilateral exercise, which was conducted Dec. 7-17, 2020.

Communications, maneuvering units, fires and complex effects across the spectrum of military operations were on display across two simulated “islands” as the integrated forces exercised tactics in sup-



LCPL SCOTT AUBUCHON, USMC

Above: During Exercise Forest Light Eastern Army on mainland Japan, 2ndLt Dakota Ford, a communication strategy and operations officer with 3/8, “sights in” while training alongside members of the JGSDF, Dec. 16, 2020.

Below: Marines with 3/8 and Japanese soldiers with the 30th Infantry Regiment, 12th Brigade, JGSDF, are briefed on upcoming integrated defensive tactics during Exercise Forest Light Eastern Army in Niigata Prefecture, Japan, Dec. 10, 2020.



LCPL JONATHAN WILLCOX, USMC



CPL LEVI GUERRA, USMC

Above: A Marine with 3/8 fast ropes from a Japanese CH-47 during Exercise Forest Light Eastern Army in Japan, Dec. 8, 2020. The annual bilateral training exercise strengthens the interoperability and readiness of the Marine Corps and JGSDF to deter aggression and defeat any threat.



CPL LEVI GUERRA, USMC

Above: Japanese soldiers with the JGSDF's 30th Infantry Regiment, 12th Brigade, and Marines with 3/8 conduct fast rope training during Exercise Forest Light Eastern Army in Japan, Dec. 10, 2020. The exercise focused on seizing and defending key maritime terrain as an integrated force.

port of expeditionary advanced base operations. These widely distributed but connected operations became a matter of muscle memory for the more than 1,000 members of the JGSDF and USMC who embraced the challenging terrain and weather.

During this iteration of Forest Light, Marines with 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine

Regiment, currently deployed to 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, joined their Japanese counterparts from the 30th Infantry Regiment, 12th Brigade.

"The command and control, the logistical challenge involved ... it was intense," said Major Joshua White, the operations officer for 3/8. "Our logistics Marines did incredible work ensuring a self-supporting

capability and distributed command and control, and I can attest to the relentless drive and skill of our entire combined U.S.-Japan operations team."

White and a small, flexible team of his operations counterparts from across the battalion and the JGSDF's 30th Infantry Regiment controlled the exercise forces from a variety of locations.

A traditional tent complex, impromptu use of existing infrastructure, and mobile command post systems mounted in Joint Light Tactical Vehicles and carried by Marines were used by 3/8 and its JGSDF partners, allowing a fast, smooth and distributed control of forces.

With JGSDF snipers relaying information, the Marines and Japanese soldiers storming landing zones from Japanese CH-47s and USMC MV-22 Ospreys, and an integrated effort against all domains, Forest Light was a "significant step forward in our partnership and becoming stronger together," said Lieutenant Colonel Neil Berry, the commanding officer of 3/8.

As an integrated force, the troops relentlessly drilled together on the tactics, techniques and procedures required to seize and defend key maritime terrain from individual marksmanship, unmanned aerial systems operations and intelligence collections to planning and coordination of airborne assaults and distributed maritime defense operations.

"Through this exercise, we have learned many fruitful lessons and deepened mutual understanding," said Japanese Colonel Yuichiro Endo, the commander of the JGSDF's 30th Infantry Regiment.

LtCol Berry echoed this assessment, stating directly that the exercise was about developing the U.S.-Japan Alliance's "innovation, capabilities and lethality, leaving no doubt about our readiness and willingness to operate in the current environment."

"We're standing shoulder to shoulder against any challenge," Berry noted. "Whether it comes in the form of a humanitarian crisis, aggression against the Japan-U.S. alliance, or COVID-19, we are integrated, prepared and ready to defend our nation's greatest treasures—our people."

Japanese and U.S. forces manning the same defensive positions, keeping watch on the same sights and systems in a mobile command post, and sharing moments of cross-cultural understanding are some of the enduring images of Forest Light.

"It is always a great opportunity to exchange knowledge and train with our allies," said Japanese Sergeant First Class Noriaki Araake of the 30th Infantry Regiment. "We are prepared for any conflict."

Capt Nicholas Royer, USMC

Aboard USS *Gabrielle Giffords* (LCS-10), Marines with MARFORSOUTH assist with preparations for launching a rigid-hulled inflatable boat, Nov. 27, 2020. The Marines embarked aboard the littoral combat ship for a three-week assessment to support naval integration and interoperability between the Navy and Marine Corps.

EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN MARFORSOUTH Marines Assess Ability to Deploy on LCS

Marines with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, South embarked on the littoral combat ship USS *Gabrielle Giffords* (LCS-1) on Nov. 16, 2020, for a three-week assessment in order to meet the Corps' Force Design 2030 effort and to identify future Marine Corps integration and interoperability opportunities in the U.S. Southern Command theater.

Force Design 2030 is a report created by the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General David H. Berger, that directs the Marine Corps to prepare and set conditions to meet the challenges of the future while supporting the ongoing naval integration initiative.

Gabrielle Giffords is deployed to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of responsibility to support the mission of Joint Interagency Task Force–South, which includes countering illicit drug trafficking in the Carib-



CPL CAMILA MELENDEZ, USMC

bean and Eastern Pacific.

The assessment of this class of ship, which is known for its stealth, agility, versatility and maneuverability through littoral waters, aimed to set conditions for developing future littoral combat ship employment concepts and Marine Corps deployment for training opportunities in the Latin American and Caribbean regions.

“It’s designed to operate at much higher speeds than a traditional combative ship,

as well as much shallower waters than where most ships are able to gain access. So that opens up the ports that we can pull into,” said Commander Rion Martin, USN, the commanding officer of USS *Gabrielle Giffords*.

The four-Marine team actively engaged with the crew to evaluate how Marines can integrate on a littoral combat ship and be best prepared to serve as an integrated team in the Latin American and Caribbean region.



CPL CAMILA MELENDEZ, USMC

Marines assigned to MARFORSOUTH work with Sailors as they prepare to launch a rigid-hulled inflatable boat from USS *Gabrielle Giffords*, Nov. 20, 2020. *Gabrielle Giffords* was deployed to the U.S. 4th Fleet area of responsibility to support Joint Interagency Task Force South’s mission, which includes counter-illicit drug trafficking in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific.

While embarked, the team was able to observe counter-illicit trafficking operations with an embarked law enforcement detachment from the U.S. Coast Guard, flight deck operations and small boat operations with their rigid hull inflatable boat. *Gabrielle Giffords* also conducted underway replenishment operations, picking up pallets of supplies from their Chilean Navy partners aboard replenishment oiler CNS *Almirante Montt* (AO-52).

Colonel David Emmel, the operations officer for MARFORSOUTH, said deploying Marines aboard a littoral combat ship helps identify how best to integrate the Navy and Marine Corps team in support of expeditionary advanced base operations and other missions. The Commandant's Planning Guidance states that future naval force development and employment will include new capabilities that will ensure the Navy and Marine Corps team cannot be excluded from any region in advancing or protecting national interests or those of U.S. allies.

"Right now, the Marine Corps integrates with the Navy and they allow us to transport them somewhere quickly," said CDR Martin. "The LCS and its speed capability is a significant opportunity for the deployment of Marines, and the Commandant's Planning Guidance includes the idea of smaller elements being more dispersed or dispersing lethality and taking smaller groups of Marines on platforms. Spreading them out can really confound the enemies' targeting solution."

Force Design 2030 calls for substantial adjustments in how the Marine Corps organizes, trains and equips the force to support a profound shift in missions from inland to littoral. The shift in missions aligns with the Commandant's focus and emphasis on the importance of naval integration for the modernization of the Marine Corps.

"The intent for deploying Marines on the littoral combat ship was to further develop Marine Corps contributions to emerging naval operating concepts and to assess how we can better integrate and support our shipmates to accomplish a mission," said Col Emmel.

Major George Saenz, an engineering officer with MARFORSOUTH who led the four-Marine assessment team aboard USS *Gabrielle Giffords*, said there's still a need to experiment with Marines in order to further evaluate and develop processes such as the launch and recovery tactics and procedures from an LCS. Nonetheless, the ship offers the potential to deploy Marines with niche capabilities that fall in line with the Commandant's Planning Guidance.

"I'm excited at the possibility of Ma-



Above: A Marine Corps KC-130J Super Hercules drops cargo and personnel at Drop Zone Basilone during a parachute operation on MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 10, 2020. Marines with Air Delivery Plt, Landing Support Co, 1st TSB, 1st MLG worked with 3rd MAW during the training. (Photo by LCpl Andrew Cortez, USMC)



Marines prepare to static line jump from a KC-130J over Drop Zone Basilone at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 10, 2020. During a static line jump, Marines' parachutes are attached to the aircraft with a cord, which deploys the canopy during the jump and enables a safe landing. (Photo by LCpl Drake Nickels, USMC)

rines being able to deploy on this type of platform," said Saenz. "I think this is an excellent opportunity for the Marine Corps to train at sea with our partners in the region, assure our partners of our capabilities to support our shared challenges and maximize our maritime presence over vast distances aboard agile ships like an LCS."

Cpl Camila Melendez, USMC

CAMP PENDLETON, CALIF. Drop Zone: Air Delivery Marines Flex Their Skills

Marines with Air Delivery Platoon, Landing Support Company, 1st Transportation Support Battalion, 1st Marine Logistics Group coordinated a parachute operation at Drop Zone Basilone, Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton, Calif., to refresh their aerial delivery and low-



Left: Marines jump down to Drop Zone Basilone on MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 10, 2020. The Marines of 1st TSB planned the training event and invited members of other Camp Pendleton-based units to participate, enabling them to gain proficiency and remain current with their airborne jump training.

level static line jump skills, Dec. 11, 2020.

By inviting other Camp Pendleton-based units to participate in the training event, 1st TSB enabled Marines with airborne and jump missions within 1st Marine Division and I Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group to gain proficiency and remain current with their jump training.

The aerial delivery Marines coordinated with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing to use a KC-130J Super Hercules as part of the training. In addition to the actual paratroopers, the Marines loaded the aircraft with container delivery systems and door bundles to simulate a resupply.

“It’s important that we do this training because it allows us to practice in rugged terrain and puts us in real-world environments that we can fine tune our skill sets in,” said Gunnery Sergeant Kyle Bridges, the aerial delivery chief with Air Delivery Plt.

After taking off, the aircraft made several passes over the drop zone so the Marines could line themselves up before doing the physical drop. Once the Marines jumped out of the aircraft, the supply bundles soon followed.

The air delivery Marines usually conduct two or three parachute operations each month to help maintain their proficiency. Being stationed on Camp Pendleton and having MCAS Camp Pendleton nearby streamlines the planning process.

“Having the air station right here is crucial to us,” said First Lieutenant Amy Horney, the Air Delivery platoon commander. “If we didn’t, if we had to go to Miramar or Yuma or something like that, it would take a huge toll on the logistical planning that we have to do each time.”

All of the different training areas on Camp Pendleton also provide some advantages for the Marines, Horney added.

“With Camp Pendleton being so large, there are multiple drop zones on the base,” explained Horney. “We can go all the way up north, we can stay down here by the air station. We can go toward different units to help them out and take less of a toll on their logistical planning. Camp Pendleton is definitely a golden site for us in order to do those two to three operations a month, in addition to all the other exercises we support.”

LCpl Andrew Cortez, USMC

www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck

LCPL ANDREW CORTEZ, USMC



LCPL ANDREW CORTEZ, USMC



LCPL ANDREW CORTEZ, USMC

Above left: Sgt Juan Lira, an EOD technician with Combat Logistics Bn 13, Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st MLG, packs his parachute after completing a static line jump out of a KC-130J at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 10, 2020.

Above right: After a static line jump onto Drop Zone Basilone at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 10, 2020, LCpl Deanna Bonham, a parachute rigger with Air Delivery Plt, Landing Support Co, 1st TSB, 1st MLG ensures her parachute is packed appropriately.



CPL CODY ROWE, USMC

Above: Maj Zach Worth, an MV-22B Osprey pilot with VMM-262 (Rein), 31st MEU, pilots his aircraft over the coast of Okinawa, Japan, during a simulated helicopter raid as part of MEUEX, Dec. 17, 2020.

Below: Sgt Alfredo Arroyo, USMC, and HM3 Devan Glover, USN, both with India Co, BLT 3/4, 31st MEU, provide security during a helicopter raid as part of MEUEX at Ie Shima, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 17, 2020. The training prepared the company for future missions as the 31st MEU's helicopter raid force.



CPL CODY ROWE, USMC

**OKINAWA, JAPAN
Despite Pandemic Restrictions,
MEUEX Carries On,
Ensures Readiness**

The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), made up of Battalion Landing Team 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment; Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 262, Reinforced; and Combat Logistics Battalion 31 wrapped up two full weeks of rapid mission planning and execution during a MEU Exercise (MEUEX) at Camp Hansen, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 18, 2020.

MEUEX is a routine exercise conducted by the 31st MEU every time the Marine air-ground task force composites with new units. Due to the risk of international travel associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, personnel and units arriving on Okinawa from the U.S. were required to execute a strict 14-day restriction of movement (ROM) and receive negative results from a COVID test in order to mitigate the risks of anyone spreading the virus. Immediately after being cleared to exit ROM, the Marines of BLT 3/4, who traveled from Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., rolled right into MEUEX with the rest of the MAGTF.



LCPL BRIENNA TUCK, USMC

Marines with Kilo Co, BLT 3/4, 31st MEU prepare a combat rubber raiding craft for a simulated boat raid at Kin Red, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 16, 2020. The company conducted the raid in the dark to enhance its proficiency for night operations during MEUEX.

“MEUEX was the first opportunity for BLT 3/4 to execute missions with the full support and resources available within the 31st MEU. It’s a unique experience for our Marines to plan, execute and coordinate with enablers from across the MAGTF,” said Major Ryan Hart, BLT 3/4 operations officer. “The BLT, or ‘the Darkside’ as we call ourselves, gained a greater appreciation for the combat power that the MEU can bring to bear on the enemy in this dynamic area of operations. There’s no doubt we are part of a more lethal MAGTF as a result of the training we’ve conducted the last two weeks.”

As an MV-22B Osprey squadron stationed permanently in Okinawa, VMM-262 attaches to the 31st MEU for one year at a time and receives reinforcements from Hawaii and California to become a complete aviation combat element.

According to Maj Gene Ziemba, the operations officer for VMM-262 (Rein), “This was the second MEUEX of the year for the world-famous ‘Flying Tigers’ of VMM-262, but the first opportunity to integrate with our detachments from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 463,



LCPL BRIENNA TUCK, USMC

LCpl Jerren Strong, a mortarman with Kilo Co, BLT 3/4, 31st MEU, covers his face with camo paint in preparation for a simulated boat raid at Kin Red, Okinawa, Japan, during MEUEX, Dec. 16, 2020.

Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 267 and Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3 as well as BLT 3/4. This was great training and allowed us the opportunity to validate, revise and rewrite

our standard operating procedures. It was the first step towards winning and learning our way into being a true reinforced squadron and a combined arms MATGF.”

MEUEX kicked off with a scenario involving humanitarian assistance, requiring the MEU to rapidly insert a forward command element and humanitarian assistance survey team into a simulated embassy in order to coordinate for follow-on missions. As the scenario unfolded, missions included embassy reinforcement, non-combatant evacuation, reconnaissance and small-scale raids. The overall purpose of MEUEX was to build a well-established team and build upon existing practices to ensure readiness for upcoming exercises.

The 31st MEU, the Marine Corps’ only continuously forward-deployed MEU, provides a flexible and lethal force ready to perform a wide range of military operations as the premier crisis response force in the Indo-Pacific region.

1stLt Stephanie Murphy, USMC



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Left: Robert G. West stands in front of the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C., during a sightseeing tour in January 1962 when he was stationed at MSG School in Quantico, Va.

Right: The main building of the Marine House at 2 Cong Troung Chin Si in Saigon, Vietnam. (Photo by Robert G. West)

COURTESY OF ROBERT G. WEST

The Making of a Man

Memories from the Corps and the Event of a Lifetime

By Robert G. West

When I finished boot camp in 1958, the Marine Corps decided, in its infinite wisdom, that I should be an 0311 rifleman. I went to my first duty assignment with “Golf” Company, 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Brigade, at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. I was happy as a rifleman with an M1 Garand in a fire team within a rifle squad, in a rifle platoon, within a Marine Corps rifle company.

All was well until one afternoon I was ordered to report to the company office. I couldn’t figure out how I’d managed to get into trouble in such a short time. I reported smartly and stood at attention before the chief clerk and the company first sergeant. They had my personnel file spread out in front of them.

After what seemed like a lifetime, the first sergeant said, almost as an accusation, “Private West, you can type!” I nodded a response and said, “Yessir, I took typing in high school.” He gave the chief clerk a soft thump on his shoulder and announced to

me, “As of this moment you’re transferred from your rifle squad into this office.” In the blink of an eye, my T/O weapon went from an M1 to a Remington typewriter.

A few years later in February 1962, I graduated with class number 1-62 at the Marine Security Guard School, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va. The day we received our embassy assignments was memorable. As they called names off, I realized I wasn’t going to Lisbon, Paris, Stockholm, Athens or anywhere else equally cosmopolitan. Tom Mollick, LeRoy Vestal and I were being sent to Saigon; I didn’t even know where that was. I’d never heard of South Vietnam, though I was familiar with French Indochina, a name that was offered as a reference point. I made a mad dash to the library and dug into whatever news magazines were available. What I read chilled my spine and accelerated my pulse. “Holy crap,” I remember saying aloud, “there’s a shootin’ war going on over there!” Little did I know.

After flying 9,003 miles, most of it by military air transport service, with

stopovers in San Francisco, Honolulu and Guam, we landed at Clark Air Base in the Philippines. After a quick stopover in Manila to get our passports stamped with a Vietnam visa, we boarded an Air France commercial airliner and continued. The whole trip was strange for the three of us. As Marines now working under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, we weren’t allowed to travel in uniform, so we made the trip from Washington, D.C., in our brand-new business suits. On Feb. 24, 1962, three wide-eyed and excited young Marines arrived in torrid, muggy, stinky, exhilarating and exotic Saigon.

The embassy itself issued a notice of welcome in its March 2 weekly bulletin but the Vietnamese welcomed us on Feb. 27 when two South Vietnamese pilots bombed President Ngo Dinh Diem’s palace, just a few blocks from our villa. I remember riding in our van to the embassy for continued orientation, watching the airplanes out of the corner of my eye. I was not gawking, certainly, and was trying to be cool about the whole thing, wondering what on earth I’d gotten



Left: The Marine Security Guard Honor Detail for three American helicopter pilots who were killed during the Battle of Ap Bac, Jan. 2, 1963. From the left, facing casket: LCpl Randy Urquhart, Cpl John Kinel and GySgt William Raber. From the right: LCpl Robert G. West and Capt Richard Vaillant.

SSGT DELBERT BELL, USMC

myself into. It wouldn't be the last time I'd wonder that.

On Oct. 6, 1962, several of us who were just heading into town for a beer or two were treated to a haunting, unforgettable sight. At one of the major downtown intersections, a young Buddhist monk, right before our eyes, doused himself with gasoline and, with the clink and scratch

of a Zippo, turned himself into a living and dying torch. The images of that act—the smell and crackle of burning flesh, the eye-stinging smoke—will always be so close that a mere whiff of gasoline or the smell of garbage burning can trigger a flashback to that scene. It also would not be the last time we got up close and personal with Buddhist monks.

During the height of the persecutions of the Buddhist majority by the Roman Catholic minority, several monks sought and were granted political asylum in our embassy, and we became babysitting bodyguards. None of the bonzes (or monks) spoke English, at least not when I was on post. We had a small table and a chair just outside their room, and except for when their meals (which always consisted of rice and fish covered with a nasty smelling sauce called “nouc mam”) were served, it was as boring as watching grass grow.

On Jan. 2, 1963, three Americans died in a skirmish near a village called Ap Bac. I was not aware of it at the time, but it was the single, most decisive Army of



COURTESY OF ROBERT G. WEST

Leroy Westrom, left, the NCOIC of the MSG and Clenton Jones, the Assistant NCOIC, in front of Marine House after it was hit by stray rockets during a military coup on Nov. 1, 1963.

Vietnam defeat to date and established the foundation for the coming coup d'état. I was part of the detachment that had the dubious distinction of providing the Honor guard escorting the caskets of the three American helicopter pilots into the belly of the airplane that would take them home. Though our troops in the field were technically still advisors, it certainly wouldn't be the last time we did that. The killing, and the "going home in boxes," had begun in earnest.

November 1963 proved most memorable and contained events that I will remember forever. On the 1st, I went to work and by 9 a.m., reports started circulating that a coup by several South Vietnamese generals was underway. By 10 a.m., the radios went silent and our news sources dried up. For the next 20 to 30 hours, everyone but our assistant NCOIC, who was stranded at the Marine House, was on duty somewhere in the city. Corporal Curly McDonald and I drew post number four, which was the Embassy Annex, around the corner from the main Embassy. At about 10 p.m., I went up the street to see what the guys at the embassy were up to but scurried back less than a half hour later when a column of Vietnamese tanks came rumbling down Ham Nghi Boulevard. It turned out they

were looking for the Presidential Palace and had gotten lost. They sure caught our attention. Sometime around 3 a.m., I was leaning against the wall just outside the door of the Annex. It was quiet, oppressively hot and muggy. There hadn't been any sounds of cannon or rifle fire in a couple of hours. Suddenly, from somewhere very close but totally out of sight, a single shot rang out and about 2 feet above my head. The round ricocheted off the wall. Paying respect to the cliché that "prudence was the better part of valor," I moved back inside. I passed the rest of my watch—hot and sweaty, but at least a bit safer. Later that morning, before we were all relieved from post duty, we heard that President Diem and his brother had been assassinated and the country was in the hands of the military. That kept our attention, but not much changed.

When we finally got back to the Marine House, I discovered that the room I shared with Lance Corporal David Oman had taken a stray aerial rocket, which blew the roof off and did extensive damage to our stuff inside. The damage included setting free Oman's pet boa constrictor, which he'd kept confined in a glass case on top of his dresser. I saw the snake was loose, so I packed a bag and moved into

the Caravelle Hotel. Two days later, the snake was found, curled up and sleeping peacefully in the bottom drawer of a dresser two rooms down from mine. The maid putting clothes away found the critter and screamed. She promptly quit, and I moved back.

Three weeks later, President Kennedy was assassinated. One of the cliché questions of our era is to ask, "Where were you when JFK was killed?" I was asleep in Saigon. At about 2 a.m., one of the midnight watch guards came to the Marine House to tell everyone the President had been shot. I remember being awakened and first thinking that such an announcement was a sick practical joke. I also remember not quite being able to get back to sleep. The possibilities were just too scary.

Within a couple of weeks of the assassination, and despite the ever-present feeling that an invasion from North Vietnam was imminent, a condolence book was set up, as they were in embassies and consulates around the world. The local citizens were invited to sign their condolences, and later the books were gathered up to be given to the Kennedy family. Ours was set up in the Consular Office, just to the left of our guard desk. On the second

An inside look at the room in Marine House shared by Cpls George G. West and David Oman before the building was hit by a stray rocket Nov. 1, 1963.



COURTESY OF ROBERT G. WEST

day, I had honor guard duty beside the book. The line went out the embassy door, down the sidewalk and all the way to the river. There must have been 250 people, all standing in line and waiting patiently for their turn. From where I stood, I could see everyone in line. As a youngster, no more than 14 or 15, entered the lobby, my internal warning system kicked into high gear. He was fidgety, looking around and reaching into his pants pockets as if checking something. The political situation in Saigon was still volatile, so when my arm hairs stood on end, I paid attention. The closer this young man got to the book, the more nervous and agitated he seemed to become. By the time he was next in line, my own nerves were bouncing off the ceiling. Then, just as he was about to take the chair at the Condolence Book, he whipped out a big, black switchblade. There were some gasps and screams from the others in line, and it seemed like everyone tried to melt into the walls.

As soon as I saw the knife, my hand headed for my holstered .38-caliber police special, but before my pistol cleared leather, he'd sliced the palm of his hand and was busy weeping and signing the Condolence Book—in blood. I found out what it felt like to be imminently relieved and thoroughly terrified, all at the same time.

From the left: Miss Hue, the future Mrs. George Nadeau; Sgt George Nadeau; Cpl Richard Vaillant; LCpl Robert G. West; David McCabe, Embassy security officer; and LCpl Thomas Mollick celebrate the Marine Corps Birthday at a ball on Nov. 10, 1962.

Shortly after ushering in the new year of 1964, Dave Oman and I decided that we'd had quite enough of being cooped up in beautiful downtown Saigon. Quite contrary to embassy security regulations, we rented a car and driver and went out to the resort town of Vung Tao. It was known to the French as Cap St. Jacques. We spent a delightful day drinking wine, eating French bread and cheese and washing away the stress and odors of Saigon in the incredible blue waters of the South China Sea. We spent the next day getting reamed out by our NCOIC and the embassy security officer. They didn't seem to take as much delight in our escapade as we did. They were aghast at our driving unarmed, without escort,

through the heart of Viet Cong-controlled territory. After all, didn't we remember that the entire Marine Security Guard detachment was on a Viet Cong hit list? We wondered to ourselves, what made them think we weren't armed?

A week later, Dave came down with a case of hepatitis. It wasn't serious, and he was out of the hospital in another week, but on one of my visits to see him, there was a body a few beds down swathed in bandages from head to toe. I asked an Army captain who was walking by what had happened. The wounded man was a private first class who had been manning an observation post along one of the tributaries of the Mekong River. His job was to stay hidden, stay quiet and observe and report on river traffic. Sometime during his watch, he'd been attacked by a tiger. The soldier, maintaining his quiet, fought the cat with his combat knife. The cat had used its teeth and claws. His relief found them that evening. The private was hamburger. The cat was dead. That's always been one of my definitions of courage. I told that Army captain I thought his PFC would have made a helluva Marine. I don't think he realized I was paying the man the highest of compliments.

In early February 1964, I celebrated my second anniversary on embassy duty, which ultimately would culminate with an event of a lifetime. Photojournalist Larry Burrows, on assignment for *Life* magazine, was in town from Hong Kong to write about the ambassador, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., who had been Richard Nixon's running mate during the previous presidential election. Back in the land of the big PX, the Republicans wanted him to return home to derail the Goldwater



COURTESY OF ROBERT G. WEST

candidacy. I still remember the day when Burrows made arrangements to take pictures of Lodge leaving the embassy. Corporal Wayne Maupin and I were assigned to escort the ambassador from the lobby to his vehicle, bracketed by barbed-wire barricades, as Burrows snapped photos. Burrows hung around for the rest of the week, continuing his assignment, so not much thought was given to any one part or picture-shooting sequence. He told me that he ended up shooting more than 30 rolls of 35 mm film. Then he was gone, and the event was forgotten.

A couple of days into the third week of March, I was on duty again when someone from the Marine House came running into the United States Operations Mission lobby and tossed the March 20, 1964, issue of *Life* in front of me. There we were, Ambassador Lodge flanked by Corporals Maupin and West, in living color. We were on the cover of *Life* magazine! I'm still in awe of that cover and of the photograph, even if it did irritate the Commandant of the Marine Corps, because my nicely starched uniform shirt had, over the previous 25 months, faded to almost pure white instead of Marine Corps khaki. A cable arrived the next day from the Commandant, General Wallace M. Green Jr., telling our NCOIC to "have that young Marine get rid of that shirt!" But, as I explained to the boss, that was my salty shirt, and I promised to wear it only on the midnight watch. Crisis averted.

Years later, I was saddened to hear that Larry Burrows died in 1971, chasing another story of the war into Laos during Operation Lam Son 719. He was such a class act—as professional as they come, and as courageous as an Army PFC fighting a tiger with a knife.

Sometime between March and August 1964, when I caught my freedom bird, a single event happened that would continue to rattle my cage for years. By that time, I'd been in country for more than two years, and had a well-developed "spidey-sense" regarding personal safety. One afternoon, just before the embassy staff would be exiting the building for the day, I noticed a Vietnamese man just across the lane from our lobby. He was holding a loaf of bread and paced nervously. That's what set my system a-tingling. Just as the elevator opened, and the first flood of staffers came into the lobby, the guy across the street reached into his loaf of

bread, took out a hand grenade, pulled the pin and tossed it into the lobby. All I had time to do was yell, "Cover—Get Down!"

I dove behind the reinforced concrete wall that protected our duty desk and waited for the explosion. One second. Two seconds. Three seconds. Then a fourth, fifth, and sixth—all of which seemed to take several hours to pass. Nothing. Our NCOIC nudged me and nodded that I should go check things out. As reluctant as I was to do that, I crawled on all fours across the lobby toward the

can redoubt at Ton Son Nhut airport. It was ringed by batteries of 155 mm howitzers that would send projectiles into the jungle. Virtually every night, I'd go to bed and fall asleep to the cacophony of the rhythmic booming of those cannons as they sent H&I (harassment and interdiction) shells into the jungle. It was years before I could go to sleep without hearing all those guns, some 9,003 miles removed.

Now, 30 months after arriving for a 24-month tour, it was my turn to go home. It is always with a smile that I remember one final image. I was packed and ready for my stuff to be shipped home. Three locals were hired to weigh and move suitcases, trunks, footlockers and a seabag. They arrived bright and early, knocked politely, and entered my room all businesslike, one carrying a pink bathroom scale under his arm. Their methodology? One stood on the scale, bent at the waist. The other two lifted a piece, placed it on his back and recorded the weight. Then, grinning like all three knew something I didn't, they recorded the weight of their partner on the scale, subtracted and with an air of triumph, slapped an official-looking tag on the box and moved on.

I thoroughly enjoyed my months in Saigon. For a wide-eyed, relatively naïve youngster like me, it was a helluva place to broaden his horizons and slip into adulthood. Today, it may be just another megatropolis with something in excess of 7 million people, but in the early 1960s, it was the ultimate sandbox, a place to work and play and a place where everything I envisioned about being a United States Marine came to fruition. I left there believing in our cause and our commitment to that lovely little country. But, after all is said and done, after all the arguments, the hair-pulling, the charges and counter-charges, after the history books are all written and all the other lives moved on or repaired, it will still be Cpl West and Cpl Maupin, flanking Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., on the cover of the March 20, 1964, issue of *Life* magazine.

Author's bio: Robert G. West served on active duty from 1958-1964. One of the highlights of his career was serving as a Marine Security Guard. A proud resident of the Pacific Northwest, Bob is now, in his words, a TUOM—Temporarily Unassigned Old Marine. 🍷



Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr., center, and bodyguards, Cpls George G. West, left, and Wayne Maupin, emerge from the U.S. Embassy in Saigon.

grenade. It was just lying on the floor, benign, but deadly. Ever so gently, I moved the grenade around and noticed that when the pin had been pulled, the detonator had come out too. That was all that saved multiple lives, including my own. Suddenly, someone thrust a bottle of scotch into my hand. It had been a gift from Ambassador Lodge, with the message reading, "Well done, young man." Sitting there on my butt, in the middle of the lobby, trembling uncontrollably, I didn't think I'd done much, let alone done it well. I had dreams of that incident for years afterward. Fortunately, even in my dreams, the damn thing never went off.

One other thing lingered with me for years after I got home, even after I got married and my first child was born. Our villa in Saigon was miles from the Ameri-

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The Advisors

Story and photos by Sgt Ray Wolf, USMC

The morning sun had barely peeked over the horizon as the Marines maneuvered into position. They'd already been on the move for nearly three hours. The battalion commander made last-minute checks on everyone's position, then nodded to his radio operator to give him the handset. The message he sent was, "Fire!" In the distance, two batteries of Vietnamese Marine 105 mm howitzers barked their reply.

As volley upon volley whistled overhead and impacted in the tree line, the Vietnamese colonel and his American Marine advisor crouched low and waited. Under the artillery fire's cover, the forward elements began closing on the target with fire team rushes.

As suddenly as it had begun, the artillery stopped and the lead elements assaulted the battered tree line. Surely, no one could still be alive in the tree line yet orange flashes from a machine gun quickly proved that "Charlie" was still there.

The enemy's aim was good; three men fell, others dove for cover.

A corpsman was attending to the wounded as a perfect shot from a Marine's

M-79 grenade launcher silenced the Viet Cong bunker. As smoke began drifting from the machine gun's former position, a trio of Vietnamese Marines left the battalion command post and headed for their casualties.

Leading the way, a Vietnamese Marine sprinted to stay ahead of the others while the last man struggled with a field radio, trying to keep up with the group and still not lose any of his equipment. In the middle, standing a head taller than the two Vietnamese, the USMC advisor presented a possible target for any would-be snipers as he slogged through knee-deep, rice-paddy mud. The Vietnamese were obviously losing their battle to keep up with his strides.

A quick look at the wounded told the advisor an emergency medevac would be needed.

A landing zone was established as the advisor radioed his request. Suddenly, firing broke out at the other end of the tree line. The enemy had become aware of the futility of retreat—the battalion had them surrounded.

Sporadic fighting continued as a U.S. Army helicopter arrived overhead. The



Col W.M. Van Zuyen, left, senior Marine advisor to the Vietnamese Marine Corps, conferred with members of his staff in the field.

firing intensified as the Vietnamese Marines attempted to keep "Charlie's" head down when the bird landed.

The advisor threw a smoke grenade and stood up as the helicopter made its landing approach, then directed the pilot's landing with arm signals.

As the helicopter touched down, casualties were loaded aboard and the advisor directed it to take off. As the bird lifted, the Vietnamese Marine dove for cover from small arms fire whistling overhead.

The remainder of the day was spent routing the enemy force. As the battle ebbed, the advisor found time to jot down notes of the day's action, pointing out his



Advisors played crucial roles in Vietnam, especially in the latter years of the war when they served as liaisons to U.S. ground units.

suggestion to the commander to move out under cover of darkness, adding an element of surprise.

He had directed five U.S. artillery missions, coordinated four flights of fixed-wing aircraft and three additional medevac missions. Now it was time to get some chow and a little rest before radioing in the night artillery coordinates.

There are some who might have been tempted to pass up the meal after hearing the menu: rice, pork, chicken, bamboo sprouts, squash, cucumbers, and boiled greens, seasoned with extremely hot peppers smothered with a putrid smelling sauce made of fermented fish, called

For a man serving a tour as an advisor in Vietnam, his time is dominated by changes. From the day he arrives in Vietnam ... to the day he gets on the plane heading for home, he'll be changing and adapting.

“nuoc mam.” It would be prepared by the headquarters squad in their cooking pot.

For the advisor, eating the Vietnamese food was merely one more facet in the wide pattern of “strange” things to which he’d become accustomed.

For a man serving a tour as an advisor in Vietnam, his time is dominated by changes. From the day he arrives in Vietnam and starts to acclimatize, to the day he gets on the plane heading for home, he’ll be changing and adapting.

The major reason for the changes is the fact that the Vietnamese people are very proud and set in their ways. The quicker a Westerner shows a willingness



to learn new customs, the quicker he'll be accepted.

An advisor couldn't exist if he weren't accepted by the South Vietnamese. The degree of acceptance and confidence is directly correlated to the degree of success he'll enjoy in his assignment.

A new advisor will find himself assigned to either a battalion or a brigade. To help him through his tour, he's assigned Vietnamese Marines: a driver, a radio operator and a versatile individual known as his "cowboy."

A cowboy is much the same as a business executive's "girl Friday." He'll do laundry, cook meals, carry equipment, clean weapons, and in general, be a bodyguard. Acts of bravery by cowboys under fire have made the position one of envy and prestige, usually assigned to combat-proved veterans.

The job of advising is viewed differently by various advisors, but they all agree on one point: It's a very rewarding job—one that calls for not only military knowledge, but also tact and persuasiveness.

Major E.G. Rivers spent his first tour

Above: An informal meeting between American advisors and their Vietnamese allies was held in an old French fort.

Below: Capt L.P. Woodburn enjoyed a submarine sandwich, Vietnamese style, prepared by his Vietnamese aide.





Below: Maj G.A. Adams, left, advisor to a Vietnamese battalion, briefed Maj E.G. Rivers, brigade advisor, on some of the problems his Vietnamese unit was encountering regarding logistics support and medevacs.



as an advisor to the 2nd ARVN Division and was then assigned to the Vietnamese Marines.

Formed in October 1954, with a strength of 1,437 men, the Vietnamese Marine Corps was tasked with surveillance of waterways and amphibious operations on the coast and rivers. Because of its success in combat operations throughout the Mekong Delta, the Corps was upped in strength to three battalions in 1959.

The first USMC advisors in Vietnam arrived in the late 1950s in the form of an assistant naval attache and a single advisor to the fledgling Vietnamese Marine Corps. By 1962, the Vietnamese had five battalions of Marines with one American Marine advisor assigned to each. During a one-year tour at this time, an advisor could count on spending more than 30 percent of his time in the field and the rest on training problems.

As the tempo of the war increased, so did the number of advisors and their responsibilities. With the introduction of U.S. helicopters as a supporting element, the advisor thus became an air controller.

In 1964, American Marines were filling billets with Vietnamese Army units in addition to their Marine Corps.

The large build-up of American forces in the mid-1960s brought the advisors another realm of responsibility—liaison with U.S. ground units. During Operation Blue Marlin, Vietnamese and U.S. Marines landed on adjacent beaches after being quartered and fed aboard U.S. ships.

The cooperation enjoyed by the two units brought these words of praise from Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent Peter Arnette: “The U.S. and Vietnamese Marines are working together in an ideal arrangement—one not enjoyed elsewhere in the country.”

senior in rank, older and had more combat experience. The advisor had to brave the same degree of risk, and sometimes more, because his physical size and the task of assisting helicopters made him a primary target.

During the early years, many advisors knew little or no Vietnamese and their counterparts’ command of the English language was limited. Many times, an advisor would use pidgin English or sign language to get information so he could direct jet aircraft on bombing runs.

For the advisor on the ground in battle, it was a case of having no real say in what happened but being responsible to ensure that it happened well.

The Marines tackled this situation with the equation, “The success of the advisor’s efforts to win the respect and cooperation of his Vietnamese counterpart is the direct equation of professional competence and knowledge multiplied by the amount of time that the advisor and counterpart spend together.”

It proved to be the needed formula. The Marines achieved their goals by getting to know their Vietnamese commander, his personal traits, the men of his unit and most of all, customs of the country.

For the Vietnamese commander, it was no longer a case of just another American showing up full of well-intended, if not always practical, suggestions. Now, it was an American who took an interest in the commander’s country and showed a real desire to be helpful while still being respectful.

A plaque on the wall of the advisors’ headquarters in Saigon sums it up with

For the advisor on the ground in battle, it was a case of having no real say in what happened but being responsible to ensure that it happened well.

Arnette’s observations stemmed from the successful technique of winning your counterpart’s respect and admiration through hard work. To visualize the obstacles that had to be overcome by the advisors, consider the following situation.

The advisor had no command authority whatsoever. His counterpart usually was



Maj E.G. Rivers, center, introduced his replacement, Maj C.A. Gatchel, right, to a Vietnamese member of the brigade headquarters unit.

these words: “The patient but persistent advisor who hears his counterpart ask, ‘What do you think?’ has just been informed that he is a success.”

Throughout his tour the advisor has one goal in mind: “To work himself out of a job.” Meaning that when the Vietnamese Marines are good enough to do the job without the assistance of an advisor, ex-

cept for liaison and translation duties, they’ve achieved their mission.

As Maj Rivers was preparing to rotate to the States, he had the chance to see his unit operate on their own. “When the Vietnamese moved into Cambodia along the Mekong River [May-June 1970], advisors were only allowed to go about 20 miles into Cambodia, but the Viet-

Throughout his tour the advisor has one goal in mind: “To work himself out of a job.” Meaning that when the Vietnamese Marines are good enough to do the job without the assistance of an advisor, ... they’ve achieved their mission.

namese kept going,” he recalled. “And keep going they did, through some of the roughest fighting they’d ever been in!”

The situation was a little hard to swallow at first. The advisors had been with these outfits for nearly a year, and now that they were really in a fight, the advisors couldn’t be there with them. After thinking it over, Maj Rivers realized this was the goal they’d been working for.

Pridefully, he commented, “They’re proving what a job the advisors have done; they’re fighting the war on their own and doing a damn fine job of it! 🇺🇸”



When time and the situation permit, Marine advisors hold informal meetings at brigade headquarters to discuss the progress of the Vietnamese units.



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Social Media ... Passing the Word in the 21st Century

By Col Mary H. Reinwald, USMC (Ret)

Social media. What was initially a means by which people could connect and interact with friends and loved ones virtually has now often become a source of conflict, derision and negativity. The Marine Corps has felt the sting of the downside of social media. The infamous Marines United scandal had an especially troublesome impact on

the Marine Corps and resulted in wide sweeping investigations and disciplinary action taken against numerous Marines. Social media, in all of its many forms, however, can still have a tremendously positive impact and serve as a wonderful

communications tool for Marines, family members, and veterans. A quick look at a variety of current social media groups affiliated in some way to the Corps reveals that there is much to appreciate about this relatively new form of communication.

Remembering

March 20, 1989, was a horrific day for the Marines of 1st Battalion, 5th Marines. Participating in Exercise Team Spirit, 30 of the battalion's Marines were aboard a CH53-D Sea Stallion when it crashed near Pohang, South Korea. Nineteen Marines, including the pilots, were killed, and numerous Marines were wounded. Art Stillwell was one of the Marines who survived the crash unharmed physically but carrying the emotional scar of survivor's guilt and a deep frustration that he couldn't do more to help his fellow Marines who perished in the crash. Stilwell created the memorial Facebook page "Remembering Pohang Korea Helo Crash 1989" with a goal of "remembering the sacrifice of those that did not come home and a place to connect with those that did." Its 623 members are composed of survivors, other Marines from the battalion, and friends and families of those who were lost. According to Stillwell,

"The mission of the page is to put together as many people as possible to let them know/talk about that morning." The page's more than 600 members post everything from photos of Marines of the battalion before they deployed to Korea to memories of that fateful day. Some of the posts are sad and heartbreaking as members detail how the loss still haunts them. "Many wanted to know how their son/brother died. Did he suffer? Was it fast?" said Stillwell. "I was able to put to rest so many of the family members' minds that their sons died heroes." The support received from other members of the group is also cathartic and seems to help those left behind who receive reassurances that their loved ones are not only remembered but truly missed. And while posts and comments are frequent throughout the year, the anniversary of the crash always sees a spike in engagement on the group's Facebook page. "I usually write something and it goes," Stillwell confirmed. "Others just jump in to remember."



COURTESY OF ART STILLWELL

Inspired by the cover photo of the "Remembering Pohang, Korea, Helo Crash 1989" Facebook group, Marine Corps veteran Art Stilwell had this tattoo created.

Resources

A military affiliated group formed with an entirely different goal is “Military Kids: Growing, Going, Gone.” Designed to provide advice and information for spouses of retired service-members navigating their “new” world after the Marine Corps, the informational Facebook page is an outstanding resource for those embarking on the new and often intimidating post retirement world as they also face sons and daughters beginning to transition from home. An avid “Facebooker” and Marine spouse, it occurred one day to Diane Papaj that the one group who would benefit from the connections available via social media groups was the parents of military teens. Papaj, the mother of a college sophomore and wife of a retired Marine who spent 30 years in the Corps, created the group and opened it to the parents of middle school children through young adults. Active-duty, reserve, and retired servicemembers and their spouses make up the almost 10,000 members who interact on the pages multiple times a day sharing resources, advice, and experiences. The group has been mentioned in other venues and publications as a resource for military parents and its strong word of mouth connections are perhaps the best indication of its success and impact. Information provided runs the gamut from questions about the Post-9/11 GI Bill to recommendations on the best retirement cities to concerns with various insurance options. “What I would have given for someone that could have helped me ... and shared anecdotal experiences,” Papaj said. Thanks to her efforts, other military spouses now have that resource.

Active-duty Marines also use social media as a resource. Groups have been established based on geographic locations including the Facebook group “Make the Stumps Better” which was created by a previous commanding general of Twentynine Palms as a way in which he could communicate and “share information and ideas, with an overall goal of

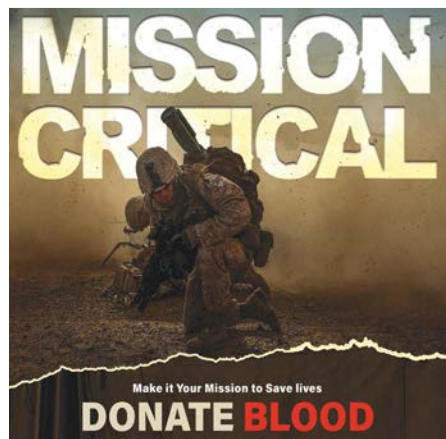
making life aboard the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center better for all” given the relatively isolated population of the military base in the California desert. The group moderator solicits input and suggestions and then forwards them to the appropriate sections or units aboard the base. Its more than 6,000 members cross all commands aboard the sprawling base and the group has served as a platform

for live events in which senior Marines have addressed and answered questions from base residents and Marines. Other bases throughout the Corps have similar social media presences and use their sites to keep base personnel and family members informed, often much more quickly than traditional methods. When dealing with fires near Camp Pendleton, typhoons in

Okinawa, or hurricanes impacting Camp Lejeune, social media platforms are often the first place Marines and families look to for the most up to date information.

Individual units use social media to help pass the word (think a modern-day frost call) or to keep loved ones informed

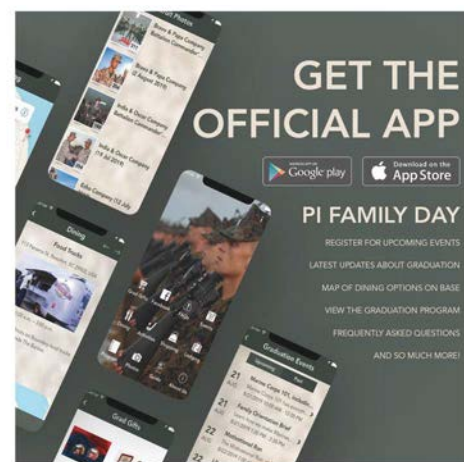
**“What I would have given for someone that could have helped me ... and shared anecdotal experiences.”
—Diane Papaj**



CPL ANTONIO GARCIA, USMC

of what their Marines are doing on deployment. During the 22nd MEU’s recent deployment to Spain as part of Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force–Crisis Response-Africa 20.2, its COMMSTRAT office provided a steady flow of content on all its social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) ranging from tributes in memory of those lost on Sept 11, 2001, to photos of the Marines training on the Iberian peninsula. The command also maintains two other Facebook groups: one for spouses and another for family readiness recognizing that spouses of Marines have different interests and concerns than parents/grandparents, according to Captain Karen Holliday, COMMSTRAT Director. While the MEU’s main Facebook page is open to all, membership in the spouses and family readiness groups is vetted and limited to authorized contact members of a 22nd MEU Marine or Sailor. Capt Holliday noted that the commanding officer responds and posts in the groups as needed to communicate with the spouses and family members.

The Corps’ embrace of the use of social media platforms has been especially



Many of the official Marine Corps social media accounts create eye-catching and attractive posts like the two above as a means by which to pass information to Marines, families and others aboard bases across the Corps. (USMC photos)

Official Marine Corps social media accounts are often filled with photos and stories of unit events including Birthday Balls, reenlistments and promotions like the one to the left in which Sgt Richard Ramsahai, an intelligence specialist with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, was promoted to the rank of sergeant, Jan. 4.

beneficial to families and friends of recruits and candidates undergoing initial training at the recruit depots and Officer Candidates School.

While recruits still make the traditional phone call when they arrive and send old-fashioned letters home during their time aboard the recruit depots, their loved ones now have almost daily visibility on what their sons and daughters are doing thanks to pictures and videos posted by recruit battalions and the depots themselves. Photos of recruits and candidates on the rifle range or practicing drill are posted on a regular basis, and family members and friends enjoy hunting for “their” future Marine among the exhausted, dirty and often unrecognizable recruits and candidates. The comments accompanying the posts are clear evidence of the joy that the photos invoke in those who are anxious to see their children. Social media is also used to pass the word on graduation activities and even to advertise banners, photo frames and other memorabilia by which family members can show their pride in their Marines. Recent Officer Candidates School posts show emotional candidates receiving their first eagle, globe and anchor while also providing detailed information on the upcoming graduation restrictions.

Resources for Military Occupational Specialties

Especially beneficial to those still on active duty are the various groups designed to share information, examples and points of contact for those Marines in certain military occupational specialties. The Adjutant USMC Facebook group provides a venue for manpower and administration officers with a means to connect to others in the relatively small MOS where they are usually the only 0102. The lack of MOS mentors or even assistance in a job where policies and directives are constantly changed and updated and the Marines they serve present new and often unique challenges on a daily



LCPL GRACE J. KINDRED, USMC

The first female Marines to graduate from Drill Instructor School at MCRD San Diego, Calif., Sgt Ikea Kaufman, Sgt Stephanie Jordi and Sgt Stephanie J. Fahl stand in front of the MCRD’s Drill Instructor Monument Dec. 16, 2020. The photo was posted on numerous Marine Corps social media accounts in celebration of the milestone.

basis makes the group a godsend to many. A review of the group’s posts provides a startling insight into the variety of both questions asked and answers provided as well as general topics thrown out to the 01s for discussion. Posts ranged from “Has anyone successfully processed a Combat Action Ribbon where the command recommend ‘ZZ’ [no award]?” to requests for information on the history of the S-1 serving as the responsible officer for EPW handling to job announcements. Confirmation of rumors (“Are Marines involved in COVID support being put in for Humanitarian Service Medals?”), memes (“Look angry and carry a bunch of folders”), requests for specific Standard Operating Procedures, check-in sheets, briefs and even polls (“Who is in charge of the Government Travel Charge Card program in your unit?”) can be found at any given time. The success and reach of the page is perhaps best shown when members of the group serving within Headquarters Marine Corps, including the Awards Branch or the Promotion Branch, use the page to let members know that updates to directives have been made or ask for input on projects they are working on.

Like the Marine Corps itself, the Adjutant group started over drinks. Major James Sheehan, the original group administrator, sent an email out to his fellow company grade 01s in the fall

of 2014 to see if anyone wanted to get together while the assignment monitors were on Okinawa for the annual Manpower Management Officer Assignment road show. While talking to the 10 or so officers who met on Camp Foster, Sheehan asked the group, “Why don’t we have a forum where we can all talk as a community?” He noted that the personnel officers had a Facebook group but not the adjutants. As he was talking, Capt Viviana Lee grabbed her smartphone and created the group.

While the initial concept was for the group to be company grades only, within a week more than 100 adjutants of all grades had joined. The group is now open to all 0102s whether active, reserve or veteran, civilians and CWOs in key manpower billets, and even some lawyers. The group has attracted the attention of senior leaders within the community and one occupational field sponsor is actively engaged and regularly uses the page to ask opinions, get input, and pass information. According to Lieutenant Colonel Joseph Donald, the assistant head of the Manpower and Reserve Affairs Secretariat and a former 01 occupational field sponsor, “The proliferation of Facebook has connected the Manpower & Personnel Administration community in incredibly beneficial ways. It allows the professional community to exchange ideas and seek recommendations and guidance from peers globally, 24 hours



From base road closures, gym hours, official travel information and even what Marines can and can't do during election season, social media is often used to ensure information is promulgated in a timely and efficient manner. (USMC photos)



| Travel Type | Approved Authority | Remarks |
|-------------------------|---|---------|
| Domestic, Military | 1. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 2. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 3. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 4. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. | |
| Domestic, Civilian | 1. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 2. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 3. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 4. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. | |
| International, Military | 1. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 2. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 3. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 4. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. | |
| International, Civilian | 1. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 2. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 3. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. 4. Commanding Officer (CO) or authorized representative. | |



a day. Additionally, it's available on our personal handheld devices any time we choose to use the forum." Donald also mentioned the advantages of social media's 24/7 cycle. "We no longer have to wait for the workday to start on Okinawa while we on the East Coast end ours to ask a general question about pay and entitlements or a question concerning an overseas PCS move. Posting a single request for information will undoubtedly elicit a host of responses. Additionally, sharing and commenting on articles of interest from professional periodicals is an incredibly powerful way to exchange views and ideas across the community."

Capt Catherine Baniakas, the assistant aircraft maintenance officer for VMM-362, started the Female Marine Corps Officer Facebook group when she was newly stationed in North Carolina and

looking for mentorship and professional development while also hoping to meet other female officers within her MOS. She carefully vets all prospective members with the goal of ensuring that the group is a safe space where women in the Corps can discuss a variety of issues and concerns. Open to female officers past and present, the group's membership is more than 1,200 and includes some of the Corps' general officers. Growing the group, however, wasn't exactly easy. "When I first launched the group, I would stop every officer I saw, and ask them to check out the group. At first, some were hesitant. However, once I communicated the intent for personal and professional development, some women requested to join, and others didn't. I also asked everyone in the group to add their Facebook friends that were also female

Marine officers," said Baniakas. She continued to work to make the group diverse in terms of rank and MOS. "I knew for the group to be useful for everyone, it needed to have several women from each MOS. You can share an MOS and have different experiences and know about different opportunities simply due to each person's individual experience and connections they made along the way. I really wanted this to be a forum in which that knowledge was shared among the masses. My experiences have affirmed that you are only as knowledgeable, and good at your MOS, because of who mentored you, who you worked with, and what conversations you had with the people you have met. I wanted to be mentored and be successful, and I knew I wasn't alone." Like the adjutant page, mentorship is a huge component of the female Marine officer page. "Having members that can give advice on career decisions, billet opportunities, and overall mentorship is invaluable. I am so humbled and elated that we have so many Field Grade Officers and General Officers," she explained.

The page averages about four new posts a day with multiple comments on each. While the specifics are different, the pattern is the same as many as the other groups. Informational (the McCain Fellowship is taking applications), requests for assistance (a young family member is about to go to TBS, any ideas of how to best prepare these days?), recommendations (the War on the Rocks article "From Capt Queeg to Winston Churchill: Lessons in Leading Up") and of course, memes ("Daughters should not be taught to depend on a knight to save them; they should be taught how to use the sword themselves").



PAUL X. KELLEY COLLECTION, MARINE CORPS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

As an example of how things were done in the "old Corps," the Adjutants Facebook page recently posted this photo taken in 1984 of Gen Paul X. Kelley, the 28th Commandant of the Marine Corps receiving a brief on a unit's staffing.

Joining

While many groups are open to the public and a simple “Like” or “Join” provides instant access to the various Facebook pages, others carefully vet potential members. Administrators for the “Remembering Pohang” page are especially careful. “Anyone that has some sort of relation to that day is open to join. You have to request,

and I vet as much as I possibly can. I get requests for individuals to join. If I see they have a friend in the site, I allow it. I may send them a message back to see what their interest is in joining our page,” according to Art Stillwell. Other groups start the screening process by asking a few questions. “Military Kids: Growing, Going, Gone” uses that method combined with invitations from current members. Administrators for the female Marine officers group go a step further after prospective

members answer initial questions thanks to their ability as active-duty Marines to access various systems. “I verify their name, rank, billet in MOL [Marine On Line]. If they are no longer found in MOL, then the requesting member provides a photo of themselves in uniform with their name and rank visible. It may sound a bit stringent, but it is really important to ensure this group remains a safe space for our discussions,” said Baniakas.



USMC

Social media accounts at the recruit depots and Officer Candidates School are especially popular with the family and friends of the soon-to-be Marines who eagerly await each photo posted, like this one from OCS graduation Nov. 17, 2020, hoping to catch a glimpse of their sons and daughters.

Problems

As beneficial and popular as the social media accounts can be, problems do surface. While the 22nd MEU hasn’t experienced many issues, one in particular stood out. “One instance I can think of on our public facing Instagram page occurred during our SPMAGTF Crisis Response Africa deployment. We posted a photo of a young, female, African-American corporal. Her hair was in regulation with the recent reformed changes in the Marine Corps Order on African-American hairstyles,” according to Holliday. Numerous derogatory comments were made on the post. “We responded to the commentary with portions of verbiage from the new regulations and in support of our Marine and her hairstyle. This helped reform the conversation to one that was more positive and spoke of the changes to the hair regulations.”

The “Remembering Pohang” group’s administrator is diligent about removing anyone or any post that could be considered even remotely offensive from the group. “There have only been a handful of times that someone gets out of line or posts something that has no relevance to our

crash. I remove it. Some things are better left unsaid. I want to protect the feelings of all the surviving family members,” said Stillwell.”

The Adjutant group has also experienced a few minor issues. “I’ve deleted few posts,” said Sheehan. “I deleted one be-

“[We] provide the tools for our Marines to accomplish the mission.”

—Maj Jim Sheehan

cause it would have reflected poorly on the lieutenant but messaged him.” He understands the responsibility the group has towards its Marines. “We as the leaders of our community provide the tools for our Marines to accomplish the mission. If we have failed to adapt and function like a DMV, then WE the officer have failed the Marine and the Marine Corps.”

Way Ahead

While the subject and focus of each group varies significantly, all understand the need for platforms to communicate both within and outside the Corps. “We anticipate more and more leaders will understand the power of social media influence and presence on that of our Marine Corps messaging. In order to reach important audiences, we MUST maintain communication on the most up to date social media platforms and outlets,” said Holliday. Banakais’ goals for her group are in keeping with Holliday’s sentiment. “I am hopeful that the group will continue to be used as professional means to network, seek and provide mentorship, and continue to have thought provoking discussions—ultimately ensuring the Marine Corps continues to be the finest fighting organization the world has ever seen!” Banakais said. Others have simpler but just as important hopes for their members. Stillwell’s goal for the “Remembering Pohang” page could be used by most other Marine Corps pages. “Connect with each other. Share experiences.” And do so in a positive, helpful manner. 🇺🇸



COURTESY OF LTCOL MELANIE R. BELL-CARTER, USMC

Left: Social media accounts often allow friends and followers to create their own posts, including this recent one from the “Female Marine Corps Officer” Facebook page featuring retired LtCol Katrina D. Patillo, LtCol Rhonda Martin, LtCol Liz Gomez Welch, LtCol Nicole M. Bohannon, and LtCol Melanie R. Bell-Carter.

Right: The plaque at the base of the 25-foot flagpole was erected by Mark V. Cerney on July 1, 2020, in San Diego, Calif., in memory of his fellow Marines lost in the helicopter crash in Pohang, Korea, March 20, 1989.



COURTESY OF MARK V. CERNEY

“SURVIVORS HELPING SURVIVORS HEAL”

TAPS Provides Peer Support, Resources And Comfort in Tragedy



COURTESY OF TAPS

Retired Marine LtCol Buzz Hefti, member of the TAPS Board of Directors, shows his enthusiasm during an annual TAPS Honor Guard Gala at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. Hefti, who served as a CACO during the Vietnam War, believes wholeheartedly in the organization's mission of providing peer-based emotional support for the survivors of fallen servicemembers.

Part Two

This is the second 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 One appeared in the February issue of Leatherneck.

By Sara W. Bock

As a young Marine captain at the height of the Vietnam War, Buzz Hefti knocked on the doors of 50 families' homes across the Northwestern United States, his crisp service uniform communicating the sobering news even before the dreaded words could leave his mouth: their Marine had been killed.

Assigned to the Inspector-Instructor staff with a reserve unit in Spokane, Wash., after a tour in Vietnam, Hefti served as the casualty assistance calls officer (CACO) for a fairly remote region that

included eastern Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana. With often hundreds of miles separating him from the surviving families he served, he was spread thin as the family members' only point of contact in the Marine Corps. And he did it all without a manual or CACO training and without any resources he could direct the families to that could provide the emotional support that many of them desperately needed.

"I knew when I was the CACO that there was something missing here," said Hefti, who, aside from making the initial, in-person notification of death, also planned burials for the fallen Marines and handed folded American flags to mothers, fathers and spouses on behalf of a grateful nation.

It wasn't until many years later that Hefti, then a retired lieutenant colonel working as a lobbyist on Capitol Hill, realized exactly what that missing element was.

Called into a meeting by U.S. Senator Ted

Stevens of Alaska, which was also attended by Army General John Shalikashvili, then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Hefti was introduced to Bonnie Carroll, a Gold Star spouse and retired Air Force Reserve major. In the midst of her own grief journey, she was working to start an organization that in 1994 became Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS).

As he listened to Carroll talk about her efforts to create a national peer support network for those grieving the loss of a military loved one, Hefti knew it was an endeavor he needed to support. He's been involved with the organization in various capacities ever since, and today serves on the TAPS Board of Directors.

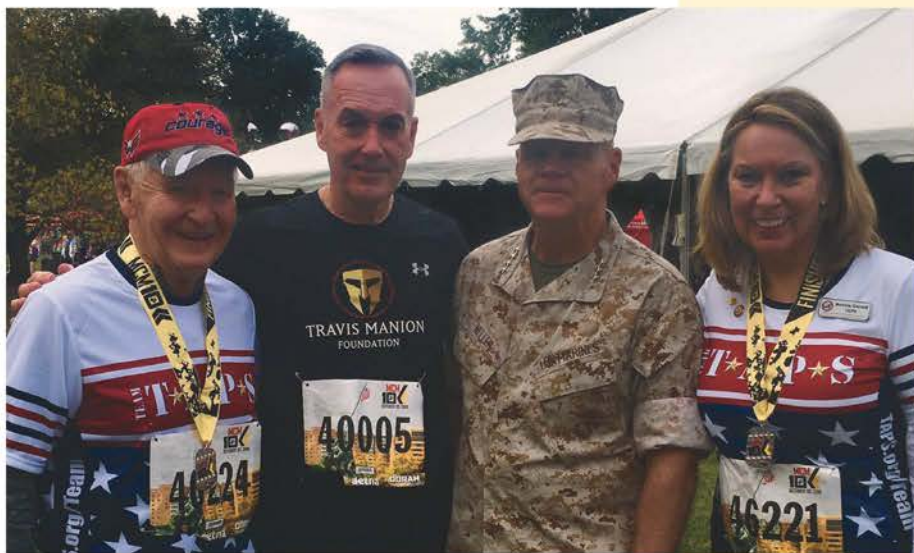
"My experience working as a CACO has proved to be invaluable with interactions with my TAPS family, and I am forever grateful for that experience. We needed TAPS when I notified all those families to help them during this early critical time for their grief—now we have this wonderful organization, and it is my personal passion to help our military families recover during their journey with grief," said Hefti. "My CACO experience was the most important duty I had in my 20-year Marine career."

For Carroll, it was her own experience navigating grief and profound loss that led her to recognize the need for a national organization that focused primarily on providing peer-based emotional support for military survivors. It was something that she had searched for, to no avail, in the wake of her husband's tragic death.

In November 1992, her husband, Brigadier General Tom Carroll, was one of eight soldiers killed in a plane crash while serving in the Alaska Army National Guard.

"The world came crashing down," said Carroll of the moments after she received the heartbreaking news. "You just don't realize how absolutely all-encompassing the death of an immediate family member is until you experience it yourself."

Carroll, who held numerous high-level government positions in Washington, D.C., while also



COURTESY OF LTCOL BUZZ HEFTI, USMC (RET)

"You just don't realize how absolutely all-encompassing the death of an immediate family member is until you experience it yourself."

—Bonnie Carroll

serving in the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, had been working on President Ronald Reagan's staff in 1988 when she was asked to travel to Alaska on behalf of the administration. She was assigned to check on the National Guard efforts in "Operation Breakthrough," the mission to save three gray whales that had become trapped by ice, the events of which were later featured in the 2012 film "Big Miracle" starring John Krasinski and Drew Barrymore. It was there that she met Tom Carroll, and, she says, "immediately fell in love." Just four years later, she became a Gold Star spouse.

Above: TAPS relies heavily on the support of senior Marine Corps leaders and gaining visibility at events like the annual Marine Corps Marathon. From the left, Hefti; Gen Joseph F. Dunford Jr., 19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen Robert B. Neller, 37th Commandant of the Marine Corps, and TAPS founder and president Bonnie Carroll gather after the Marine Corps Marathon 10K race.



COURTESY OF TAPS



COURTESY OF TAPS

Left: Bonnie Carroll met her husband, then-Col Tom Carroll of the Alaska Army National Guard, in 1988 while she was serving on President Ronald Reagan's staff. Four years later, Tom was killed in a plane crash, and Bonnie's search for peer support after that tragic loss led her to create TAPS in 1994.

“It’s helpful being surrounded by people that just get it. A lot of people give you condolences and a lot of the time people don’t know what to do or what to say, but at TAPS everybody understands”

—Anna Steg

In the months that followed his death, Carroll looked for a group or organization that could help provide the emotional support she knew she needed. There were organizations for survivors of fallen law enforcement officers and homicide victims but none for the loved ones of fallen military servicemembers—none that “spoke the language” of the unique culture of the military.

On her first Memorial Day as a Gold Star wife, Carroll attended a ceremony in Alaska alongside some of the other surviving spouses whose loved ones perished in the same crash. The group decided to go out for lunch after leaving the cemetery, and the day became a turning point for all of them. The comfort Carroll felt from being in the company of others who understood what she was going through solidified in her mind the importance of peer support for those grieving the death of a military loved one.

“Lunch went into afternoon, went into dinner, and we shut the place down when it closed at night,” said Carroll. “It was unbelievably normalizing and validating and healing to talk with someone else who got it, someone else who was living the same experience and feeling the same emotions and fears and hopes and dreams and nightmares and all of it.”

Carroll spent the next two years conducting what she called a “needs assessment and gap analysis.” Leveraging her unique experience and connections from working at the senior levels of government, she sat down with the Secretary of Defense and



COURTESY OF ANNA STEG

the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and spent time looking at what the government offered to families of fallen servicemembers, what the “gaps” were, and how they could be filled.

“I certainly didn’t want to start anything if it already existed,” said Carroll. “But doing this completely, 100 percent in coordination and consultation and awareness with DOD and VA and all the other organizations I could find who in any way touched military survivors, [...] this would become kind of the complement to all the good work already being done.”

Through her research, Carroll found four areas that needed to be addressed. These became the basis for TAPS and remain the organization’s core services today, 27 years later.



COURTESY OF TAPS

Left: Anna Steg, surviving fiancée of SSgt Benjamin Hines, holds a photograph of the fallen Marine, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2019. Connecting with TAPS has helped her find new ways to honor his life, including becoming a peer mentor for other survivors.

Left: TAPS family members gather at a Washington Nationals baseball game, one of many sports and entertainment events the organization makes possible for survivors across the U.S. each year.



COURTESY OF ANNA STEG

Right: SSgt Hines was deployed as part of the Georgia Deployment Program-Resolute Support Mission when he was killed in a car bombing in April 2019. His surviving fiancée, Anna, connected with TAPS and the experience has helped her navigate life after loss.



COURTESY OF ANNA STEG

TAPS' core services are providing a national network for peer-based emotional support; a 24/7 helpline—"grief is not 9 to 5," Carroll says; connections to community-based care like grief groups and counseling in the survivor's local area; and casework assistance, connecting survivors to education benefits, emergency financial support and other services and support organizations available to them.

"It isn't replicating what the casualty officer does," said Carroll. "The government does a brilliant job of administering benefits to those who are eligible—to designated beneficiaries—and of providing the final resting place and providing the final honors."

While TAPS is a nonprofit and not a government agency, Carroll recognized early on the importance of being closely aligned with and connected to the military service branches and having support from the highest levels of the Defense Department, all the

Steg, left, fondly remembers Hines wearing his patriotic blazer to special events, and says he wasn't afraid to showcase his love of country. She describes him as a bubbly, high-energy individual who people always enjoyed being around.

way up to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. According to Hefti, who has served as the chair for the annual TAPS Honor Guard Gala in Washington, D.C., the joint chiefs and their spouses regularly attend the gala and other events as honored guests and speakers.

Carroll is particularly impressed by the reciprocal relationship TAPS has with the Marine Corps—"the Marine Corps really truly does set the standard of care for survivors," she says—and she was thrilled that from the beginning, Marine Corps leadership has recognized the value of TAPS services for surviving families and notifies TAPS of deaths so that the organization can reach out and offer support.

"What we can do is come in very early on in that survivor's experience and offer that emotional support that's so important, to be there to provide any additional financial needs, which is really important for extended family members," said Carroll.

Carroll tells a story of getting a call from a Marine CACO who was having issues getting funding for air travel so that the brother of a fallen Marine could attend the funeral. Ten minutes later, Carroll called him back with a flight number and confirmation number from the airline.

It was a gesture that made a huge impact on that Marine. "He just became this huge fan of TAPS because he said, 'This is what we need at that moment, we need to know if it's not possible, if there isn't government eligibility for this thing that needs to happen, then boom—here's a place that you can go and it will happen immediately, and it will be done because it's the right thing to do for this family,'" Carroll recalled.

Whether it's a seemingly simple gesture like sending cards to family members on the anniversary of their loved one's death or birthday or a connection to a peer mentor who has walked in their shoes, an offer of financial support or a weekend-long seminar or camp, it means the world to survivors to know that someone recognizes their loss and is there to provide the support they need.

Anna Steg was planning a wedding when her fiancé, Marine Staff Sergeant Benjamin Hines, was killed in a car bombing in Afghanistan in April 2019 while deployed as part of the Georgia Deployment Program-Resolute Support Mission.

Just weeks after Hines was killed, Steg reached out to TAPS at the recommendation of Hines' commanding officer. They connected her with another surviving fiancée to serve as her peer mentor, which was particularly beneficial.

"It's helpful being surrounded by people that just get it. A lot of people give you condolences and a lot of the time people don't know what to do or what to say, but at TAPS everybody understands, and they give you hope [...] and inspiration that there's



COURTESY OF ASHLEY LUDDEN

Above: Marine veteran Eric Ludden left active duty as a corporal and 10 years later was diagnosed with terminal cancer. He died in 2015.

Above right: For Ashley Ludden, pictured here with Eric and their two daughters, receiving support from TAPS despite the fact that her husband no longer was serving on active duty at the time of his death has meant a great deal to her.

Far right: TAPS founder and president Bonnie Carroll embraces a participant at a TAPS survivor seminar. The organization, which traditionally has relied heavily on the benefits of in-person interaction and events, has had to modify its programming to offer virtual seminars and online care groups due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



COURTESY OF ASHLEY LUDDEN

going to be a bright future down the road,” said Steg. “I’ve gotten a lot of hope and a reminder that love does not die. That’s one of TAPS’ big things. It lives on, and it lives through us. One thing I’ve gained through it is that ‘what better way to carry on his legacy than to live my life to the fullest?’”

She describes Hines’ loving, bubbly and contagious personality and how he made everyone feel like they were his best friend. Her goal is to use her own pain to help others and she plans to become a TAPS peer mentor herself.

“He always made it his mission to try to make whoever he was around smile,” Steg said of Hines, describing a blue star-spangled blazer he would wear to social events and weddings. “It portrayed his personality and showed his love of country. And obviously in the end he ended up giving all for it.”

In the wake of Hines’ death, Steg, as a fiancée but not yet a spouse, faced a number of challenges because she wasn’t yet a military dependent and therefore was not entitled to all of the services or benefits that she would have received if they had been married. It was the welcoming, embracing environment that TAPS provided that drew her to the organization. “They accept everyone,” Steg said. “Fiancée, friend, co-worker, battle buddy—you name it, you’re accepted.”

That level of inclusivity sets TAPS apart from other organizations and ensures that everyone in need of emotional support after the death of a military servicemember will receive it.

“Everybody who that servicemember loved and left behind is absolutely welcome to everything that we have to offer,” said Carroll. “If you are grieving the loss and honoring that servicemember, somebody who has stepped forward to wear the cloth of the nation and defend our freedoms, then we are there to support you in every way that we can.”

Not only is TAPS inclusive when it comes to an individual’s relationship with the deceased, but Carroll also emphasizes that all are welcome regardless of the servicemember’s cause of death or duty status at the time of their death.

At the height of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a large percentage of the survivors referred to TAPS

“They provided a way that Eric’s life and sacrifice can be celebrated ... For me and our children, it provides a great deal of comfort and healing knowing that his sacrifices aren’t forgotten.”

—Ashley Ludden



COURTESY OF TAPS

were combat death-related; today, the primary causes of death are suicide and deaths due to illness.

“Many of the illness losses are compounded by the fact that the survivor was formerly a caregiver and is now grieving the loss of that identity as well,” said Carroll.

While the core services of TAPS have remained the same since its inception, Carroll says that the organization has adjusted its programming to support the complicated loss of suicide and the

complicated transition from caregiver to survivor that accompanies illness-related deaths.

Survivors are also welcome to seek support from TAPS regardless of the servicemember's duty status. If an individual is medically retired, is a reservist who dies while not on duty status, or is a veteran of the Armed Forces, their survivors are entitled to anything and everything TAPS offers. It also does not matter how much time has passed since the death occurred. "It's never too late," Carroll urges.

After Marine veteran Eric Ludden passed away in 2015 following a battle with bile duct cancer caused by toxic exposure, his wife, Ashley, didn't know where to turn. His diagnosis came 10 years after he left active duty as a corporal, so she didn't think that any military-related organizations would be willing to offer her help and support. But after connecting with TAPS, she was relieved to find out otherwise.

What means the most to her is that through TAPS, her husband's service is recognized, and the organization acts as an advocate in Washington, D.C., for families who have lost their loved one due to toxic exposure-related illnesses.

"They provided a way that Eric's life and sacrifice can be celebrated including him in slideshows showing the faces of toxic exposure," said Ashley Ludden. "For me and our children, it provides a great deal of comfort and healing knowing that his sacrifices aren't forgotten."

At TAPS events, seminars and camps, Carroll believes it's particularly important to encourage conversations about loved ones who have passed, ensuring that their memory lives on.

"It's an opportunity for families to really be cared for, to focus on themselves, to let go of all the other day-to-day stresses and just be with others who truly understand," Carroll said of the TAPS events. "It's OK to laugh, to cry, to tell stories—we wear photo buttons of our loved ones—to really talk about that person, because in our normal day-to-day life most of the people we know have either drifted away because it's just too uncomfortable to be around a grieving person, or they don't want to hear the stories anymore, or they won't mention the loved one because they think it's just too painful."

Over the past year, the coronavirus pandemic has presented new challenges for organizations like TAPS that rely heavily on face-to-face interaction and getting people together in person to carry out their mission.

"Surviving families and all those who are grieving are already feeling isolated, and when you add this level that now you're being actually told that you cannot go out, that we haven't been able to do these in-person gatherings that they may have looked forward to, we really ramped up our proactive outreach," Carroll said.

TAPS staff members who typically are focused on in-person events shifted their focus to checking in on survivors to offer support and encouraging them to join one of TAPS' online care groups or virtual seminars. They've transitioned their groups and events to the virtual conferencing platform



COURTESY OF TAPS

Zoom and have even created special backgrounds for the video calls so participants can appear on camera with a photo of their loved one behind them.

According to Carroll, these virtual offerings have been so well-received that they will now become a permanent option in the future, long after the pandemic has passed. She's heard from many survivors who aren't typically able to travel to events and are thrilled to now be able to connect with people all over the country who are just like them.

With a staff of nearly 100 individuals, the majority of whom are survivors themselves, TAPS continues even in challenging and unprecedented times to carry out the hard but heartfelt work of providing emotional support to the grieving.

"We do this as a family, as America's family, to honor those who have served and died," said Carroll. 🐾

Above: A "Team TAPS" runner is pictured with a Marine lieutenant at the 2018 Marine Corps Marathon. Many TAPS survivors find meaning in running races in honor of their fallen loved one, and events like the Marine Corps Marathon give TAPS a high degree of visibility in the community.

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)**

We—the Marines

Compiled by Jacqueline Jedrych

New to Lejeune: Range Terrain Challenges 2ndMarDiv Units

In a time of closures and setbacks, 2nd Marine Division's drive to remain America's force in readiness has not wavered. On Dec. 12, 2020, Marines and Sailors of "India" Company, 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2ndMarDiv conducted a live-fire company battle course for the opening of range Golf-36 (G-36), Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.'s newest and most challenging range to date and the first of its kind on the installation.

The range allows for myriad capabilities of conventional infantry units: indirect fire, breaching and unmanned aerial surveillance. In addition to requiring these assets in the scheme of maneuver, the range demands more of the mental and physical stamina of the individual Marines and Sailors.

"G-36 forces the Marines to be better prepared to execute the mission," said Staff Sergeant Samuel Whitehead, a platoon sergeant with India Co. "We have

to be more decentralized, which means every single Marine has to know precisely what they are getting ready to do, and the small unit leaders have to know what calls to make if and when there is a point of friction."

G-36 was designed to have a more naturally challenging terrain for more deliberate maneuver plans, a unique aspect compared to other ranges on Camp Lejeune. The landscape includes drastic changes in vegetation, elevation and marshlands. The range was in the works for more than a year while land on the installation was repurposed to create space for company-level assets.

"Typically, on most live ranges, the trees are removed and the grass is cut to allow the safe execution and supervision of live-fire training," said 2ndMarDiv gunner Chief Warrant Officer 5 Joshua Smith. "G-36 adds the environment as part of the problem. There are targets that are placed in areas which the unit can engage with rockets, however they are obstructed by grass and trees, which

makes the enemy harder to destroy."

Long before the construction of the range was complete, the Marines and Sailors of 3/6 had been planning and preparing to tackle the obstacles that would be put before them. Two days before the opening, India Co stayed out on the range, walking through the terrain, and rehearsing without ammunition. On the opening day, when live fire was permitted, the company faced a mechanized opponent: trackless motorized infantry targets. These targets are robotic and remote controlled, enhancing the unpredictability of the scenario.

When asked about India Co's performance, the company commander, Captain Edison Feisal, said, "The Marines did excellent. They came out here and executed with the skillsets we have worked to improve in previous ranges." Several key leaders on Camp Lejeune came to the range to witness the opening day, including Major General Frank Donovan, the commanding general of 2ndMarDiv.

"The actions done today is what the



LCPL JACQUELINE PARSONS, USMC

LCpl David Keller, a combat engineer with 2nd CEB, 2ndMarDiv, directs Marines through a cleared lane in a live-fire assault on Range G-36, Camp Lejeune, N.C., Dec. 12, 2020. Range G-36 is the newest addition to the Camp Lejeune training environment and is designed to accommodate company-size assaults and evolutions.

future of the Marine Corps looks like,” said MajGen Donovan. “As we transition to fight against a near-peer adversary, we need to be able to execute on a large scale like this and now we can do it in our own backyard.”

While more units begin leaving their own footprints in the marshlands of G-36, range coordinators and unit leaders will be planning ways to make the range more challenging. In the future, the robotic targets will be utilized outside trenches and have more maneuverability on the battlefield. Nighttime training will be allowed as the range is improved and units adapt to its level of difficulty.

Before the opening of G-36, the only company-sized range was at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif. Now, with this asset within driving distance of any unit in 2ndMarDiv, units can train here regularly. The ability to easily access the range will allow units to train and conduct in-depth evaluations on their performances as a company.

LCpl Jacqueline Parsons, USMC

Habu Attack in Kin Town: Marine Saves Life of Local Woman

Using lifesaving skills he learned as a Marine, Sergeant John James from Combat Logistics Battalion 31, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit was able to save a local elderly woman from a venomous snake bite in Kin Town, Okinawa, Japan, Nov. 6, 2020.

What started as a normal day barbecuing with friends quickly changed. “We were grilling burgers and hot dogs at the saloon bar, and suddenly we heard an elderly woman screaming in a language we didn’t understand,” said James. “We didn’t know what was wrong until she started screaming out ‘habu, habu!’ ”

The habu is a species of viper, one of four venomous snakes found in Okinawa that are a serious threat to humans. James didn’t hesitate. Using the belt of a friend who was standing nearby, he located the bite marks and fastened a tourniquet 2 inches above the wound. While the saloon owner called emergency services, James contacted a corpsman to figure out what else he could do to assist the woman who had been bitten.

Local authorities quickly arrived on scene. Finding the snake nearby, they were able to acquire the correct antivenom needed for the bite. The emergency medical providers said that through his quick actions, James was able to save the woman’s life.

“I didn’t know if I was ever going to hear from her, but I just talked to her this past weekend, and she’s doing really well. I think she went back to work about two to



CPL BRANDON SALAS, USMC

Sgt John James is presented with the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal by Tokiko Ahuso during a ceremony at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 23, 2020. James saved Ahuso’s life after she was bitten by a habu viper in November.



three days after the incident,” James said.

Growing up on a small farm in Dubois, Neb., James had many close encounters with snakes. “I was bit by a bull snake when I was 4 or 5. At the time, I was more angry than scared. It’s just something that happens back home,” said James, who enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2012.

James is currently a motor vehicle operator with CLB-31, but before coming to Okinawa, he was also part of the Marine Security Guard program where his job was to guard U.S. embassies. “We did medical training once every week for three years for embassy attack training, and a lot of the training goes into how to apply a tourniquet or do CPR.”

The 31st MEU, the Marine Corps’ only continuously forward-deployed MEU, provides a flexible and lethal force ready to perform a wide range of military operations as the premier crisis response force in the Indo-Pacific region.

Cpl Brandon Salas, USMC

Pendleton Marine Saves Trapped Baby from Burning Car

On Dec. 7, 2020, when a car burst into flames on the side of a road in Fallbrook, Calif., and threatened the life of an 18-month-old child, a Marine sprang into action to help.

Gunnery Sergeant Kyle Wetter, the formal marksmanship training center staff noncommissioned officer in charge with Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations-West, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., was on what he thought would be a typical drive home when he witnessed a gas can fall out of a nearby truck. The can became

lodged underneath the car in front of him. Sparks began to fly underneath the car and a fire immediately erupted.

Wetter immediately decided he would help the occupants of the car in any way that he could.

The driver of the car, Anthony Hurly, slammed on the brakes and pulled over, and Wetter followed. Wetter ran to the car and began analyzing the situation. The extinguisher Wetter attempted to use was no match for the fire, which at that point had too much fuel. It was then that he heard the child’s mother shout out for her baby. The father, Anthony, was already trying to get the child out with



LCPL ANDREW CORTEZ, USMC

GySgt Kyle Wetter, the formal marksmanship training center SNCO in charge with H&S Bn, Marine Corps Installations-West, MCB Camp Pendleton, sprang into action to help when a car burst into flames on the side of a road in Fallbrook, Calif. Wetter helped save the life of an 18-month-old child who was trapped in a car seat inside the burning vehicle.

no success. Wetter noticed that the car seat would not disengage from the base. At that point, Wetter tried to unbuckle the seat belt, but to no avail. He then grabbed his pocketknife to cut the seat belt and free the child.

“His preparedness is what resulted in a positive outcome,” said Captain John Choi, the public information officer with the North County Fire Protection District.

According to Choi, had Wetter not been there to assist, the child’s parents would probably have received burns or inhaled smoke due to a delayed rescue attempt and a rapidly growing fire.

“I am an infantryman, so obviously our training is to react to contact,” said Wetter. “We get taught at an early age in the Marine Corps to react to situations.”

Though Wetter has had no formal training in firefighting, he was able to assess the situation and figure out the best way to help. He credits his Marine Corps training for his ability to react at a moment’s notice. According to Wetter, this mentality was instilled in boot camp, and he has carried it with him throughout his military career.

“I am forever grateful for GySgt Kyle Wetter,” said Anthony Hurly. “He came at a time of need for my family.”

LCpl Alison Dostie, USMC

SRT Trains as Installation’s Secondary Reaction Force

Marines with the Special Reaction Team (SRT) and the Provost Marshall’s Office (PMO) executed training on fire, movement and breaching techniques at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif. on Dec. 11, 2020.

SRT Marines are military police officers who are trained to respond to high stress

situations such as hostage situations, active shooters, and barricaded suspects.

“Our primary mission as the Special Reaction Team requires us to handle all the sorts of calls too erratic for your average military police officer,” said SRT commander Sergeant Marcus L. Edwards. “PMO is always a first response to emergencies. We act as a secondary reaction force in any incidents of suspected terrorism, active shooters, or in the case that a suspect is barricaded in place.”

Edwards has been with the SRT for more than two years. He defines the SRT as a quick reaction force for incidents on the combat center and within its housing areas.

Each Marine Corps installation has a supporting PMO comprised of military police officers and Department of Defense civilian employees. The SRT is composed of anywhere from seven to 14 of those military police officers.

“We have Marines trained with various breaching techniques, such as acetylene torches, explosive charges, battering rams, and saws; one main guy who acts as our shield Marine; and the entry Marines in our stack on an emergency call,” Edwards said.

He said the SRT also includes a marksman observer who provides an overhead perspective during missions.

“Our average team is a pretty small, tight-knit group,” Edwards said. “The size can vary as Marines reach their end of active service and move to different duty stations. To maintain our numbers, we hold a semi-annual screening process.”

SRT supervisors evaluate Marines from PMO who volunteer for screening on their physical fitness and proficiency on basic Marine tasks, to ensure excellence in their team. Applicants are also screened

by several interview boards to ensure they have the personality traits essential to comprehensive teamwork.

“Our selection is pretty tough,” said Lance Corporal Jesse Rastetter, a shield Marine with SRT. “We need to run a first-class physical fitness test and combat fitness test and have an expert qualification score with our rifle and pistol. We go over some of the basics of room clearing and methods of entry into a room or building and do a lot of hard PT.”

This course is a two-week training curriculum that enables basic entry Marines to receive a secondary military occupational specialty and serve in full capacity with the SRT. “My Marines and I are always excited to get out and train,” Edwards said. “We try to get out to the range or conduct some sort of realistic training at least once a week.”

According to Edwards, SRT is constantly developing its training for the evolution of possible situations and scenarios. They stay ready to react to any scenario that falls within their mission set.

LCpl Joshua Sechser, USMC

Marines Compete in the Cyber Games

As America’s force in readiness, the Marine Corps must be ready for battle on land, sea, air, and within the digital battlespace. From locations across the United States, Marines with 6th, 8th and 9th Communication Battalions competed against each other in a “capture the flag”-style competition during the Marine Corps Cyber Games, Nov. 19, 2020.

The Cyber Games provided an opportunity for units to tackle cyber problems from different angles. Each team had different objectives to achieve and attempted to tap into various networks. Following the conclusion of the event, all defensive cyberspace operations (DCO) teams and cyber protection teams (CPTs) discussed how they were able to breach the systems and how to protect against future breaches.

Warrant Officer Cody Witter-Campbell, a defensive cyberspace weapons officer with 9th Comm Bn, led his team in their quest to capture their enemies’ flags.

“One of the main purposes of the games is to get all the DCOs and CPTs to work together on how to solve problems and

Cpl Eddie Moran, assistant team commander, SRT, PMO, MAGTFTC, fires his M4A1 service rifle during an SRT familiarization range at MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 11, 2020. SRT Marines are military police officers trained in hostage situation, active shooter, and barricaded suspect response.



LCPL JOSHUA SECHSER, USMC



LCPL PATRICK KATZ, USMC

LCpl Ian Bergman, a defensive cyberspace operator with 9th Comm Bn, I MEF Information Group, hacks into a system while engaged in the Marine Corps 2020 Cyber Games at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Nov. 19, 2020. The battalion's Marines participated in the cyber games to enhance their skills and to develop tactics and techniques while competing against other teams across the United States.

issues within the systems,” said Witter-Campbell. “It’s a capture-the-flag event; each team gets points for every milestone they reach. This is a fully controlled environment, testing on each of the hidden flags and clues.”

Although the teams consisted mainly of DCO Marines, intelligence analysts joined in to learn the ropes and cross-train in another field. Corporal Bethany Leer,

an intelligence analyst with 9th Comm Bn, participated in her second exercise. Leer normally provides intel reports to cyber Marines.

“I think it’s interesting,” said Leer. “I’m normally not around to see what they do with the intelligence we provide them; now I am learning how to apply it.”

Not only do these games provide a training aspect, but they also give Marines

a chance to compete against an adaptive opponent.

“Competition, just like anything in the Marine Corps, everyone wants competition,” said Witter-Campbell. “Although this is an important event, it’s a fun thing to do and it breaks people out of the office. We are able to come together during training to focus on something very specific.”

The event provided a competitive environment and gave Marines the chance to improve their skills. Each breach in the network was a lesson for the DCO Marines: Always be prepared for an attack in the ever-changing digital landscape.

LCpl Isaac Velasco, USMC



Crazy Caption Contest

Winner



CPL ALIZE SOTELO, USMC

“We can flank McDonald’s and move directly to Starbucks.”

Submitted by:
Thomas J. Elbert
Grafton, Ohio

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CPL BRITANY ROWLETT, USMC

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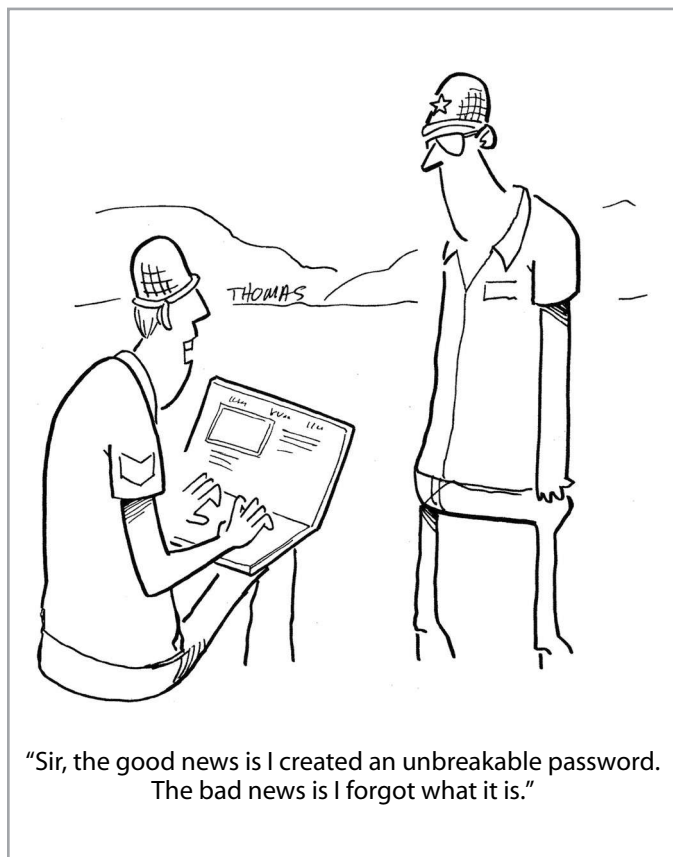
Leatherneck Laffs



"It's the sand ribbon denoting multiple tours to the Middle East."



"Opportunity for growth? I'm hoping it's in being a Marine and my bank account."



"Sir, the good news is I created an unbreakable password. The bad news is I forgot what it is."



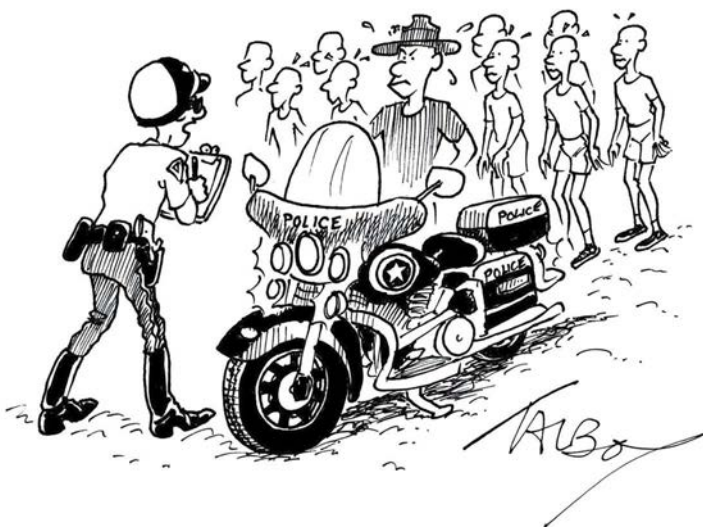
"Looks like they're running low on ammo."



"His Taliban sense is tingling."



"Parris Island 911.
What's your major malfunction?"



"Sergeant, do you know how fast your platoon was going?"



"In the Marines, we're all riflemen."

Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools

Master Instructors and Staff Development Programs Take Instruction to the Next Level

By John Lathers

“Let’s be damned sure that no man’s ghost will ever say ‘If your training program had only done its job’.”

—Jack Webb as GySgt Jim Moore in “The DI,” 1957.

Editor’s note: Marine Corps Service Support Schools, located at Camp Johnson, N.C., is home to several military occupational specialty (MOS) producing schools and is the last phase in the entry level training pipeline for thousands of administrative, logistics, supply, and financial management Marines each year. With a consistent goal of ensuring a first-class education for all students, the command is especially noteworthy for its programs focusing on its faculty and instructors.



Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools (MCCSSS) has managed a Master Instructor Program (MIP) and associated Staff and Faculty Development Program (SFDP) for more than two decades, certifying hundreds of formal school instructors and providing collegiate-level training to thousands of faculty and staff to encourage professional growth, immediate competency, and career progression.

“Our Master Instructor Program fully supports the design and implementation of 21st century instruction into Marine Corps classrooms,” said Colonel Eric Adams, Commanding Officer, Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools. “We are proud of our program and continue to reap the benefits in our mentoring and leadership programs. Offering our instructor cadre the opportunity to dis-



MCCSSS instructors are subject matter experts in their primary MOS and teach entry-level, intermediate, and advanced classes to officers, enlisted Marines, and civilians.

tinguish themselves while also incorporating the collegiate instructional techniques strengthen our ability to successfully train all Marines that arrive aboard Camp Johnson.”

Special Duty Assignment Training

Marines who reenlist can usually expect assignment to a special duty or a screenable billet outside their primary military occupational specialty (PMOS) on their next tour. Whether drill instructor, recruiter, embassy security, or formal school instructor, these duties will challenge the Marine in unfamiliar ways outside their normal areas of expertise but will also serve to greatly enhance the Marine’s professional knowledge, subject expertise, and organizational skills.

To augment a Marine’s innate ability to conquer any challenge, Marine Corps Order 1326.6, Selecting, Screening, and Preparing Enlisted Marines for Screenable Billets and Independent Duty Assignments, directs all assigned Marines to attend formal school training to ensure they are minimally prepared for the assignment. Formal course lengths for these challenging assignments range from 11 weeks for drill instructors, seven weeks for recruiters, and eight weeks for embassy security guards. Curiously, formal school instructors require only a single week of resident training after completing two weeks of online training.

As formal school instructor billets receive less formal preparatory resident training than other billets, the assigned Marine is often unprepared—or worse overconfident—to instruct, evaluate, or mentor Marines.

Consequently, because education and training remains critical to maintaining a technically competent and superior military force to achieve combat readiness, the Marine Corps Formal School Management Policy directs that each Formal Learning Center (FLC) including MCCSSS establish a program to identify and correct any gaps in instructor and staff personnel requisite knowledge as well as to identify any emerging trends in training and education. FLCs personalize their respective staff and faculty development programs based on their unique requirements while also incorporating training in advanced and emerging topics in curriculum, instruction, evaluation and adult learning.

MCCSSS’ SFDG goal is to equip formal school instructors with the knowledge and skills that will enable their students to effectively transfer learned knowledge and skills from the formal learning environment to the operating forces. Its



LCPL LUIS E. ZAMOT III, USMC

Above: SSgt Hanna Bacon, an instructor assigned to Ground Supply School (GSS), Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools, conducts a safety brief before the GSS Spartan Challenge at Camp Johnson, N.C., March 21, 2019.

Below: LtCol Nicole M. Bohannon, left, CO, Personnel Administration School (PAS), MCCSSS, and SSgt Cecily L. Camillo, an instructor with PAS, MCCSSS, pose for a photo after the Master Instructor presentation held at Camp Johnson, N.C., Nov. 5, 2020.



LCPL ALEXIS A. BALLIN, USMC

As formal school instructor billets receive less formal preparatory resident training than other billets, the assigned Marine is often unprepared—or worse overconfident—to instruct, evaluate, or mentor Marines.





SGT JAMES A. GUILLORY, USMC

Col Eric J. Adams, CO, MCCSSS, presents SSgt Dominique L. Moody the Personnel Administration School Instructor of the Year award, during a ceremony at Camp Johnson, N.C., Jan. 4.

comprehensive instruction introduces and improves instructional training practices to drive implementation of performance-based, criterion-referenced instruction. The success of the program has been impressive—during the past six years, 1,660 MCCSSS personnel have attended SFDP classes and understand the benefits of the program. “These classes not just improve your instructor skills, it helps you be a better Marine,” said Gunnery Sergeant Juan Sime, a Master Instructor formerly with Personnel Administration School, MCCSSS. “Once you move on from instructing, you are able to develop junior and senior Marines serving in our MOS.”

The creators of the MCCSSS SFDP program initially surveyed instructor and staff faculty to determine specific needs and areas of potential improvement including identifying any advanced or emerging topics relevant to the design, presentation, delivery and evaluation of lesson materials and performance examinations. SFDP courses are challenging with novel concepts, innovative ideas and practical exercises, and each course requires a measurable capstone event with an assigned grade.

MCCSSS worked extensively with the local college and university to create the eight SFDP courses designed to assist the instructor in gaining additional knowledge and practical skills. These courses include:

The Instructional Skills Development Program dedicates five days immersing Marines in effective techniques and

methods of instruction that create a student-centered learning environment, which stimulates interest and interaction. Multiple topics outlining adult learning, learning styles, presentation techniques, and teaching to facilitate learning introduce the new instructors to teaching strategies and techniques beyond the basic Instructor Development Course.

The Advanced Digital Design for Instruction allocates two days for Marines to receive hands-on practice developing custom professional media around modern principles of design and techniques to improve the quality of instruction by increasing student engagement. Topics covered include custom 2D/3D charts, video manipulation, transitioning, animation, hyperlinks, sound,



photo compression and quick access toolbars as instructional media to enhance classroom instruction.

The Design and Delivery of Instructor-led Training Theory and Practice courses dedicate two two-day sessions for Marines to learn instructional design and communication principles that address adult learners. Formal instructors are introduced to collegiate-level instructional methods and techniques designed to enhance the traditional “formal” lecture method with innovative teaching approaches geared toward stimulating student involvement and critical thinking skills in a practical setting.

The Evaluation of Testing course allots two days to introduce Marine participants to techniques used to measure the effectiveness of training programs and presents current program evaluation concepts useful in administering, designing and assessing testing programs. Marines will participate in the development of various testing instruments and experience how multiple testing methods relate to the expected learning outcomes of the specific types of training.

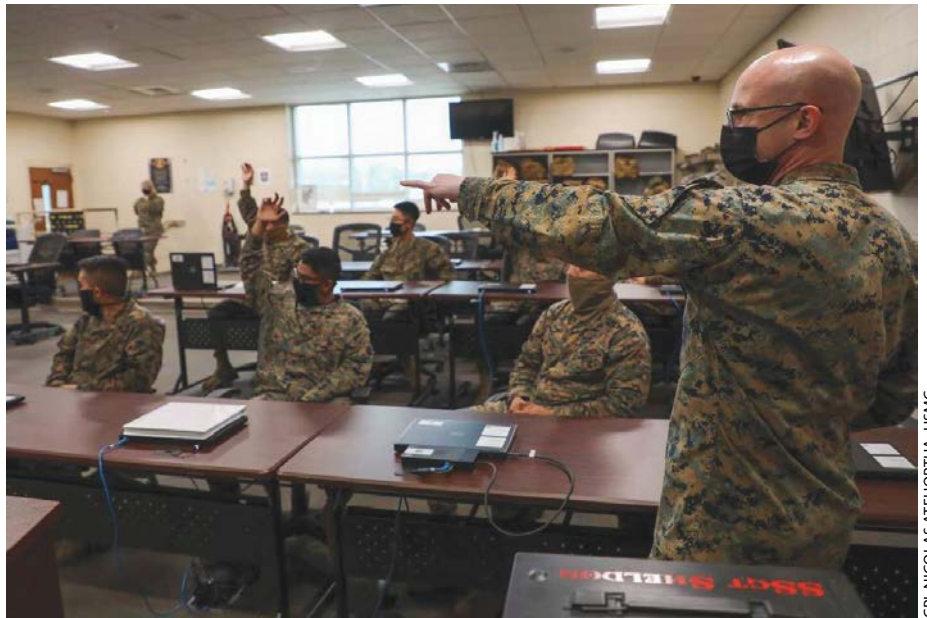
The Mentoring and Monitoring of Instruction course dedicates two days allowing Marines to participate in the development and maintenance of an effective instructor mentoring and observation program. Marines gain valuable insight on effective mentoring, observation and evaluation processes specific to developing new instructors, as well as exploring specific mentoring and observation techniques.

The Advanced Instructor Presentation and Delivery course is a two-day session focusing on advanced presentation and delivery skills. The course allows instructors to practice and improve their public speaking and delivery skills with content that includes understanding the process of communication, verbal delivery techniques and effective listening as it relates to instructing students. Instructors also gain experience through peer-evaluated presentations based on criteria learned in class.

The Effective Teaching Seminar provides Marines the opportunity to focus on the scholarship of teaching and provides a venue to discuss teaching problems and successes. With the goal of instructors developing their own unique teaching philosophy, the course seeks to improve an instructor’s current teaching practices and effectiveness through the process of reflective practice, surveying various teaching styles and observing other practicing instructors and university professors teach in a variety of settings.



MCCSSS also created the Master Instructor Program (MIP) which is designed to recognize those individuals who ... desire to gain additional advanced knowledge and practical skills beyond the minimum required Instructor Development Course.



CPL NICOLAS ATEHORTUA, USMC

MCCSSS also created the Master Instructor Program (MIP) which is designed to recognize those individuals who demonstrate the perseverance and desire to gain additional advanced knowledge and practical skills beyond the minimum required Instructor Development Course.

Unlike other services' master instructor programs, which focus strongly on developing and presenting a single lesson, MCCSSS' MIP focuses on the ongoing mentorship instructors receive while presenting multiple lessons to students

GySgt Calvin J. Phillips, a Master Instructor with Personnel Administration School, instructs entry-level Marines during a period of instruction at Camp Johnson, N.C., Dec. 11, 2020.

while also attending and successfully completing their own SFDP courses. It takes roughly 19 days to attend all SFDP courses required for MIP certification. To be certified as a Master Instructor, Marines must have a minimum of one year active "platform" (teaching) time and complete



Entry-level students like the ones here receiving an orientation brief on May 9, 2019, make up the majority of MCCSSS students each year. A key element of MCCSSS' mission is preparing the new Marines for service in the operating forces and supporting establishment. (Photo by Sgt James A. Guillory, USMC)



GySgt Christopher P. Orner, center, a Master Instructor with Logistics Operations School, provides hands-on training to Marines at Camp Johnson N.C., Jan. 6.

SGT JAMES A. GULLORY, USMC



Feedback from mentors, students and peers enhances the instructors' ability to stimulate interest in their students by staging effective learning environments ... and recognizing when a lesson was productive.

“I would recommend the program to all instructors as it benefits all aspects of being a more effective instructor,” said Master Sergeant Timothy Ussery, a Master Instructor formerly with Financial Management School, MCCSSS. “All the required courses really are informative, the evaluations force you to look at how well you’re doing, and the peer evaluations help provide a second set of eyes to tell you where you’re lacking.”

For additional information regarding MCCSSS’s Master Instructor Program, contact the MIP coordinator, Dr. Dan Lathers, S-3 Education Officer, Training Analyst and Staff Historian at john.lathers@usmc.mil.

Author’s bio: John “Dan” Lathers is a retired Marine Corps ATC maintenance chief currently serving as the Education Officer and Instructional Training Analyst for Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools. He received a doctorate of education from North Carolina State University, concentrating his studies on defining relevant instructor characteristics of military vocational instruction.

all SFDP courses. Marines may attend SFDP courses immediately upon assignment, but Master Instructor applicants usually take 12-18 months to achieve certification. MCCSSS has certified 247 Master Instructors since 2000.

In addition, MCCSSS instructors requesting MIP certification must be endorsed by their respective FLC commander and submit a professional portfolio documenting their progress throughout the MIP. The portfolio includes instructor goals and strategies, self-assessment assignments, mentor-, student-, and peer-feedback forms, and all SFDP course capstone events and completion certificates. CWO-3 Jeffrey Beasley, a Master Instructor with Logistics Operations School, MCCSSS commented. “The Master Instructor Program allows instructors to finesse their skills on the platform and in the design of their POI.”

Feedback from mentors, students and

peers enhances the instructors’ ability to stimulate interest in their students by staging effective learning environments, delivering and evaluating instruction, and recognizing when a lesson was productive or if additional delivery is required. Instructors also are required to prepare a narrative essay detailing their MIP experience.

This process allows the instructor, mentor, and MIP coordinator to observe changes in the instructor’s skill and ability to implement newly acquired collegiate-level knowledge, techniques and methods into their respective lessons. By amplifying command mentorship and relevant feedback, instructors are able to enhance their strengths and capabilities by filling their instructor’s “tool-box.” Additionally, Master Instructors are expected to assume leadership roles and mentor, instruct, and evaluate other instructors to enhance the delivery of quality training and education.

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CWO5 Stuart White II
MajGen Burke W. Whitman
Forest E. Wilson Jr.
Capt David W. Yim



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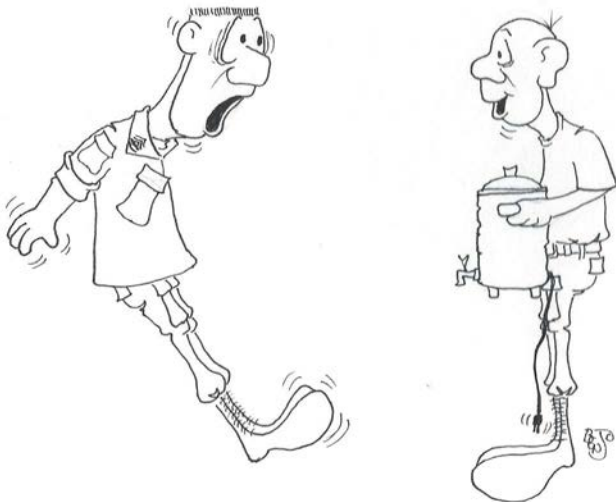
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SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

Nothing Like a Good Cup of Joe

The cartoon by Ben Spotts in the November 2020 issue of *Leatherneck* brought back a very enlightening and frightening moment in one of my not so finest moments in the Corps. In 1958, I had been transferred to the Machine Records Installation section of Co D, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps



"I cleaned your coffee pot for you, Gunny."

Base Quantico. This was the section that performed all the data processing for the base and some other installations. This unit was the forerunner of the introduction of modern-day computers and all processing was done via the punch card system.

Shortly after arriving I was given the assignment to arrive early every morning and make the coffee. I was given all the instructions as to how much water, coffee and salt that goes into making this large vat of coffee. My first morning I retrieved the vat and took it into the mop closet to fill it with just the right amount

of water. When I removed the lid, I was shocked to see all the sediment that had accumulated to the sides and bottom of the vat. Yup, you guessed it. I was so proud to have gotten all that crud off the inside of the pot and continued to add the coffee and salt. Not very long after the coffee was ready, I heard a loud and menacing scream from Gunny Fallon, "Tuohy, get your butt in here!" Immediately, I ran into his office and was asked if I had followed the instructions

for making coffee. I said I did, and his reply was, "Something's wrong. This is the worst coffee I have ever tasted. What else did you do to this coffee?" I proudly informed him that I scrubbed all the crud out of the vat. He then informed me that what I had done was remove years of flavoring from the vat.

For my diligence I was rewarded with coffee duty for the entire month and other duties not associated with my MOS. Today, I'm safe with my Keurig.

Cpl John P. Tuohy
USMC, 1955-1959
Grand Blanc, Mich.

The Best Coffee

When I was stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni in the 1960s, I was sent TAD to Naval Air Station Cubi Point in the Philippines for a bomb spotting detail. The bomb spotting got canceled because we were in a Navy shelling practice range and they wanted to practice. Instead of being sent back to Iwakuni, we were given night duty in the comm shack down by the water. One of our duties was to make coffee for the command staff.

That was our only duty aside from keeping the office secure. On my first night, I started to make the coffee but when I looked inside the pot, I decided it was too black, probably from years of use, and decided to clean it. I put soap in it and then gathered some sand and water and scrubbed and scrubbed. I was so proud of the way it was cleaned and how it shined on the inside as well as the outside. I then made the coffee the way I had been instructed.

The next morning when the staff arrived, someone got the CO a cup of coffee. When he tasted it, he asked who made it because it was the best coffee that he ever had. I was sent into his office and explained how I made it. I explained that I had followed the directions but that I washed the pot because it was so black. His attitude changed real fast, and he shouted out, "Court martial this man! He disobeyed an order!" Someone pulled me out of his office as they explained to my CO that there wasn't anything written that said not to clean the coffee maker and reminded him, "Sir, you just said it was the best

coffee that you ever had."

One of the NCOs sent me back to my quarters to get some sleep and nothing else was said, except a few jokes, about what I had done. I made many more pots of coffee without any complaints or compliments.

Bob Herd
USMC, 1961-1964
Wilmington, N.C.

"Hey Ensign, Try the Delicious Appetizers"

While stationed at Guantanamo Bay in the mid-1970s as an unmarried warrant officer, I was living in the bachelor officer quarters (BOQ). The BOQ had a bar for the residents where we could get together to socialize and have a few drinks. At the time, the base was a Fleet Training Center so there were always ships in port that were being tested and evaluated for their combat proficiency and other nautical skills that were beyond my knowledge and understanding.

When the ship's officers were on liberty, a few would occasionally visit the bar for a drink and conversation. They were all great guys who were looking forward to successfully completing their training and heading home. We would inevitably get a few ensigns who were still learning the ropes of being an officer and eager to become salty Sailors. Being a warrant officer, I was an oddity to most and these ensigns were always willing to engage in conversation and listen to my sea stories which were mainly true.

Thanks to Guantanamo Bay's hot and humid climate, cockroaches flourished no matter how hard you tried to get rid of them. Even as clean as the bar was, there was always a cockroach or two that

would scamper over it. It was a challenge to be quick enough to scoop the bugs up and dispose of them.

One day while I was talking with a young ensign, one of the little critters tried to make a mad dash across the bar. I quickly scooped it up and tossed into my mouth. Little did the ensign realize, I actually threw the critter past my mouth and faked eating it. I told the ensign that the bar manager rarely put out finger food, so the cockroaches made for good bar appetizers.

As the evening wore on, low and behold, another critter was bold enough to try and run across the bar. This time the ensign scooped him up. Not to be outdone by a Marine, he shoved the cockroach into his mouth and bit down. The next I knew he was up and running to the head where he quickly threw up his bar appetizer. When he came back, he was green around the gills and said it was time to head back to the ship. I never did see him after that. I guess he was tired of hearing of my sea stories.

Capt Dan Macsaya
USMC (Ret)
New Bern, N.C.

The Strangest Question Ever Asked

In July 1959, a young man from a small town in Nebraska joined the Marines. Within 26 hours I had a new definition of the phrase “culture shock.”

Three weeks into boot camp, I inadvertently left my footlocker unlocked one morning. When I returned at noon, I found the contents spread from wall to wall.

By 1600 I had found everything that was in my locker except one item—a \$20 bill which had been hidden in a pair of socks. I assumed it was gone. You didn’t need to be a rocket scientist to realize that your drill instructor would want to discuss this situation with you so with that thought in

mind, I put on my pressed utilities and spit-shined boots and awaited the drill instructor. At approximately 1800, the house mouse alerted me that the drill instructor was requesting my presence in the duty hut. Standing in front of his desk, I was asked if I had any problems with my footlocker that day and if I found everything. My response, “Sir, yes, Sir!” He then pulled out a \$20 and asked if I was sure. I then

Standing in front of his desk, I was asked if I had any problems with my footlocker that day and if I found everything.

told him I was missing \$20.

This is where he asked a strange question, “Private, do you know how many pennies are in a \$20 bill?” My response, “Sir, no, Sir.” He replied that there are 2,000 pennies in \$20 and that I was going to do one squat-jump for every one of them. My reply, “Sir, yes, Sir!”

I am not sure how long it took but when I left, I had my money. My utilities were soaking wet with sweat and I was exhausted. A question did arise in my mind. Did my drill instructor have time to check 67 lockers just to see if any were unlocked?

Sgt Mike Brennan
Clearwater, Fla.

No Chance With the Ladies at Quantico

This incident occurred shortly before I graduated from the Staff NCO Academy at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., May 25, 1973. I was attending the course along with a new friend whose name shall

remain a guarded secret in order to protect his marital status. One night, we jumped into my tiny MGB-GT sports car and proceeded to patrol the area around Quantico to see what we could stir up. No sooner had we turned off base, we spied two gorgeous members of the opposite sex dressed to the nines, wearing tiny little skirts waiting at a bus stop. Being a couple of well-trained Marines who knew something about acquisition of targets of opportunity, we spun the car around and asked if we could be of service.

They immediately let it be known that while our offer of logistical support (transport) would be appreciated, they were only interested in getting to the officers’ club on base to, in their words, make a little money. While our hopes were a bit down, we thought maybe we could change their minds on the way there. Getting them into the not-very-spacious jump seat of my car turned out to be quite a show, not to mention the fact that their perfume almost ran us out of the car.

We were less than successful in trying to win them over to the enlisted side as money was their clear objective. We dropped them at the front door of the club where they were immediately pounced upon by a horde of eager lieutenants. As we drove away, lamenting the failure of our battle plan, my buddy mentioned we didn’t have a chance with them since they were going for the big bucks. I agreed with him, saying, “Not to mention they smelled like a couple of French ...” and before I could finish the sentence, we looked at one another and laughed uproariously. It took several days for the reeking perfume to clear out of my precious MGB-GT.

GySgt Ray Harris
Las Vegas, Nev.


The Lieutenant Gave Me a Wink

In the early part of 1969 I transferred to Base Motors on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton. No sooner did I arrive when we got hit with an Inspector General’s Inspection. Naturally, there was the obligatory junk-on-the-bunk and locker inspection. This was followed by a uniform inspection in formation that was conducted by a captain on the inspection team.

The captain was followed by our company commander, First Lieutenant D.L. Johnson, as he conducted the inspection. As the two officers checked each man in the formation, the captain loudly proclaimed the different uniform infractions. Ribbons not properly spaced, haircuts needed. He even turned web belts inside out to inspect whether the brass had been shined on the underside. Failures were flying.

Then he got to me. He stuck a matchstick between my ribbons. They were correct. He checked my haircut. OK there as well. When he turned my web belt inside out and found the brass brightly shined, he said, “Excellent Marine!” Lt Johnson moved in front of me then gave me a sly wink. The captain did not know I had just transferred in from Marine Barracks Naval Air Station Lemoore, Calif.

Cpl Cordell Price
USMC, 1965-1971
Eastport, N.Y.

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.” 

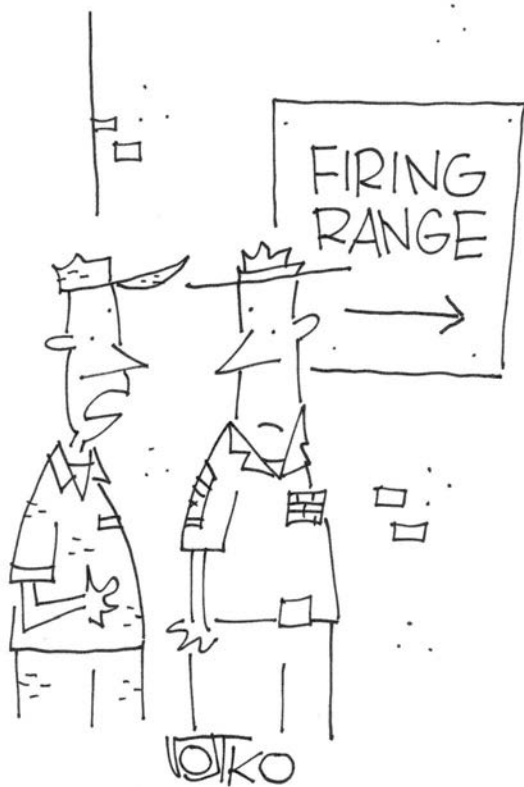
Leatherneck Laffs



"Sir, I think they put the bull's-eye in the wrong place."



"Very good! Now try it back at the firing line!"



"What's the bag limit?"



"Sir, does this mean sniper school is out?"



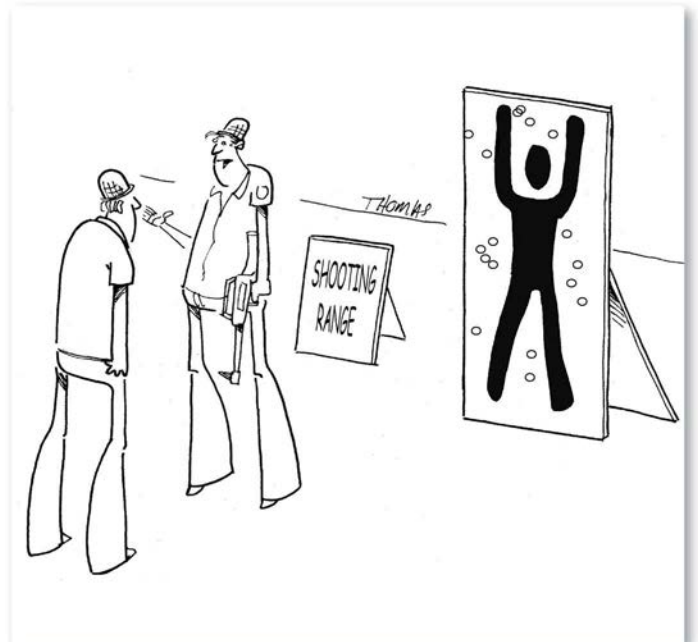
"Maybe you'd have better luck if you kept both eyes closed."



"Recruit, stop saying, 'Maybe next time,' after each miss!"



"No selfies on the range, recruit!"



"I'm not a bad shot. He's surrendering."

From the *Leatherneck Archives*: February 1945

Apamama: A Model Operation in Miniature

By Sgt Frank X. Tolbert, USMC

It has been more than a year since three platoons of the amphibious corps Reconnaissance Battalion captured the outpost atoll of Apamama in the southern Gilberts. For security reasons, even the barest details of this operation have not been revealed before. So, the tingling story of Apamama's conquest is as fresh as tomorrow's newspaper headline.

Apamama is a cluster of lovely islets coiled around a pale green lagoon some 65 miles south of Tarawa. A thick growth of coconut palms covers the islets except for the glaring white bands of the airstrips. The green of the fringing coral reefs mingles with the blue and white of the surf as if a careless artist had thrown color splotches from the beaches.

Before the Pacific war, the population was around 1,000 pious, handsome, warm-hearted and intelligent natives. Also, there were eight foreigners, in-

cluding two Australian nuns and four French or Swiss Catholic priests.

Apamama, Makin, Tarawa and some of the other atolls of the group were occupied by Japanese forces soon after Pearl Harbor. Two companies of Imperial Marines under a bantamweight and bemonocled Japanese lieutenant colonel landed on one of the northernmost islets without opposition since the native constabulary had not been permitted firearms.

The Apamamese were put to work on fortifications. They were required to bow low every time they met a Japanese trooper. The elderly and bearded French missionaries, who had lived on the atoll for more than 30 years, were slapped around and otherwise mistreated by the Japanese.

The Marine invasion of Apamama began in the dark morning of Nov. 21, 1943, one day after the landings on Tarawa and Makin.

The Marines were under command of Captain James Logan Jones of Joplin, Mo. A part of the company had been de-

tached to spearhead the Army on Makin. Jones was a wiry, soft-spoken man in the best tradition of a Marine officer, both personally and professionally. Were it possible for his battalion's activities to be reported more fully and immediately, he would be one of the most renowned men in the Marine Corps.

Capt Jones' orders were to proceed to Apamama, land in the darkness, and scout out the island, determining the strength of the hostile forces, select suitable beaches for the use of occupying American troops who were to follow in a few days, and guide these troops through the channels. The vessel which transported them was "to render direct support within the limits of her capabilities."

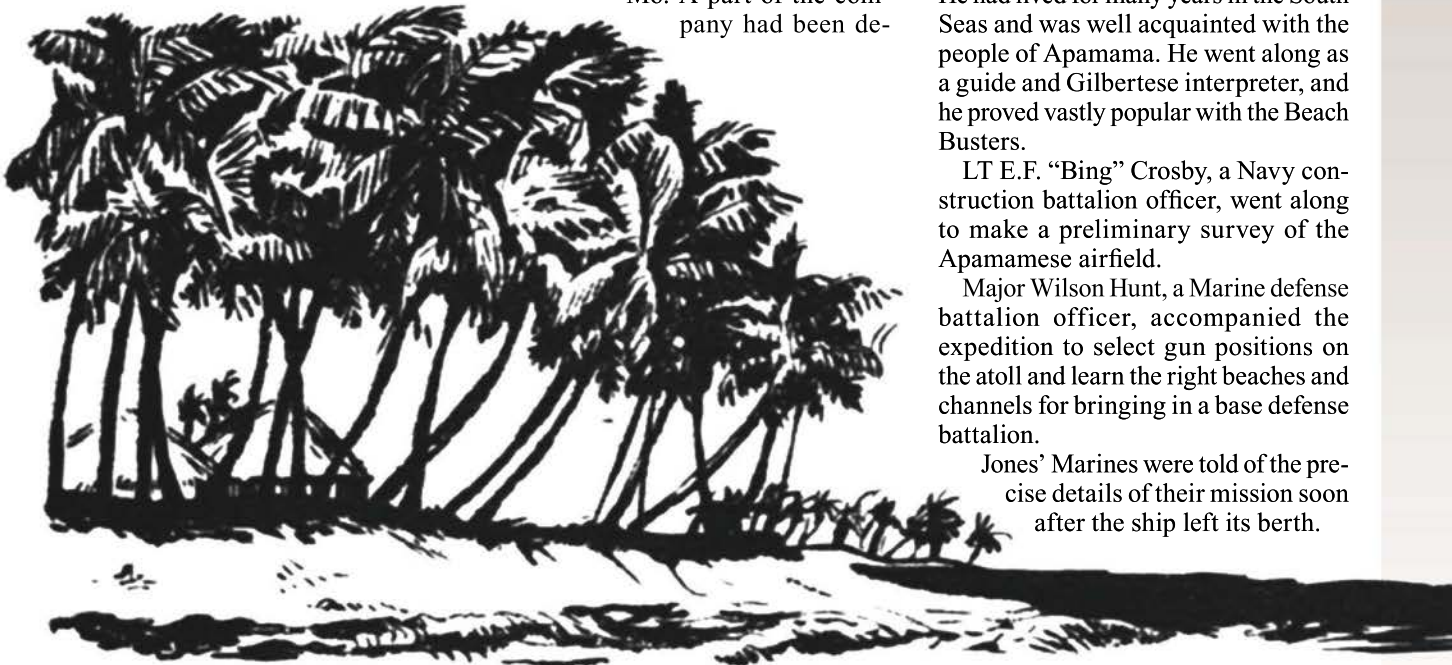
Accompanying the Marines were three officers from other branches of service and 10 Army combat engineers.

Lieutenant George Hard was a small, baldish Australian who had been detached for service with the U.S. Navy. He had lived for many years in the South Seas and was well acquainted with the people of Apamama. He went along as a guide and Gilbertese interpreter, and he proved vastly popular with the Beach Busters.

LT E.F. "Bing" Crosby, a Navy construction battalion officer, went along to make a preliminary survey of the Apamamese airfield.

Major Wilson Hunt, a Marine defense battalion officer, accompanied the expedition to select gun positions on the atoll and learn the right beaches and channels for bringing in a base defense battalion.

Jones' Marines were told of the precise details of their mission soon after the ship left its berth.



Two of the craft became separated from the others. One motor drowned out in the downpour. Two boats started towing the others. All hands paddled with a will. But they made little headway against the wind and current and mighty waves.

The craft first made a reconnaissance off Tarawa and was fired on by the Betio batteries. As the ship neared Apamama, a strong current kept the speed down.

When time came to land, each man took three K rations, one D ration and two fragmentary grenades. There were 45 rounds for each carbine, 48 rounds for the rifle, 260 rounds for the Browning Automatic Rifle, and 2,000 rounds for each .30-caliber machine gun.

They went ashore in LCRs (landing craft, rubber), most of them equipped with outboard motors. The sea was heavy, pouring water over the motors. Only three of the motors started. The others had to be paddled or towed.

The boats assembled at about midnight 100 yards aft of the ship. A course of magnetic north was given. This would bring the boats under normal conditions to the selected beachhead on Islet "X"

breath of relief. Guide boats, under the commands of Lts L.B. Shinn of Beech Creek, Ky., and H.C. Minnier of Aristes, Pa., were paddled into the beach. The rowing was easy now for the tidal current weakened at 400 yards out. But the surf boiling over the cruel coral was another obstacle. At 4:15 a.m., the men of the guide boats signaled that all was clear, and the other boats came in with the coral mauling some of them badly.

It was ascertained that they had landed on Islet "Y," 1 1/4 miles to the southwest of their objective, Islet "X."

A beachhead and command post were established with Lt Merwin H. Silverthorn Jr., of Washington, D.C., in charge. Machine guns were set up and the Army engineers were assigned to guard the command post.

One unit, under Lt Shinn (and accompanied by Lt Hard), was sent to

visit us now? The Japanese are here."

The natives informed the lieutenant that the Japanese were entrenched stoutly around a radio station on Islet "Z," which was across the reef passage to the northeast of Islet "X." The Apamama men said that the Japanese had pillboxes stopped by head coconut logs facing the reef passage and similar fortifications on the seaward and lagoon sides and to their rear. They were equipped with heavy and light machine guns, mortars, rifles, grenades, and enough ammunition for many days' fighting. According to the natives, the Japanese were fewer than the invaders. But they were in a very strong defensive position to be taken by infantry alone.

The unit returned to the command post and made a report to Capt Jones. The entire outfit moved across the reef passage on the surf side to the original objective, Islet "X," and a second beachhead and command post was established. The unit under Corey then set out on the double for the Japanese barge. When about 150 yards from the boat, a Japanese patrol was seen near the boat. Private First Class Homer Powers, a powerfully-built Browning Automatic Rifleman from Fredonia, Kan., killed one of the Japanese, shooting offhand. The others fled into a nearby coconut grove.

Lt Corey had his boys partially field strip the enemy barge. Unless they had a lot of spare parts and were superlative mechanics, the Japanese escape route was now cut off.

Back at the command post, two natives had returned with another report. The Japanese had gathered up their machine guns and other weapons and had moved across the reef passage to Islet "X,"



(Note: Exact code names for these islets cannot be designated), despite a strong westerly current.

However, soon after the start, the little fleet was hit by violent rain squalls. Two of the craft became separated from the others. One motor drowned out in the downpour. Two boats started towing the others. All hands paddled with a will. But they made little headway against the wind and current and mighty waves.

The squalls moderated after an hour. The two missing boats were located. Capt Jones changed the course to 45 degrees magnetic to allow for the distance they had drifted to the west. The sea was still rough and, still, only two outboard motors were in operation.

At 3:30 a.m., breakers on the reef were sighted and the Marines drew a deep

scout out the northwest portions of Islet "Y" while the other, under Lt Minnier, and a third under Lt Russell Corey of Hawley, Pa., went to the southwest.

Shinn's unit discovered a seagoing Japanese barge with a diesel engine, which was fueled and ready for operation. The boat was lying in the reef passage on the lagoon side between Islet "Y" and Islet "X."

Directly after discovering the barge, the Marines saw two natives crossing the reef passage near the boat. The Marines hit the deck in the bushes. When the natives were very close, Lt Hard stood up and called in Gilbertese.

The natives stared at him, grinned, and one of them replied in English, "Why, Mr. Hard. My word! I'm glad to see you. But were you wise to come and

seemingly intending to leave the atoll in their barge on the next high tide. They passed the Catholic mission at a lope. When they reached Kabangake Village, they apparently received word from a patrol that Marines were on the atoll and had found the boat. The men did an about face, and still at the lope, headed back to Islet "Z" and their fortifications around the radio station.

The Americans then started a reconnaissance in force across Islet "X." They ran into numerous natives leaving the villages and heading for the brush. Yet the Gilbertese did not seem particularly terrified, the men striding along nonchalantly and the women, most of them carrying naked

very informative. It was after dark when the Marines got back to the command post.

The men were in pretty bad physical condition by now. The ordeal en route and the nightmarish voyage in the rubber boats had given them a poor start for the operation. None of them had slept in more than two days so they rested by turns until 8:30 p.m., when radio contact was established with their vessel. A motor launch from the ship and some of the rubber boats came in through the boiling black water with supplies for 15 days.

The men tried to rest some more, but, between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. blinker lights were seen out at sea. Apparently, a Japanese submarine was trying to contact the Apamamese garrison.

There were no attacks during the night and the boys got some rest. With the morning, Jones located a native pilot named George who was capable of steering the ships through the channels when the occupying troops should arrive. The captain pondered his situation. By disabling and guarding the boat he had the Japanese cut off from escape. But he did not have the heavy weapons necessary to dislodge them from their strong position along the reef passage on Islet "X." Mortars would be needed to get troops across the exposed reef and on the flanks of the Japanese fortifications. To try to get behind the Japanese by landing in the rubber boats behind them on their islet would be inviting disaster as the enemy would be expecting something like this and they had a motor truck which could transport men quickly to meet any point of attack. Besides, the LCRs were in bad shape from their passage over the reefs.

At breakfast, the men had their first hot meal since leaving their ship. Then Maj Hunt, the ebullient LT Crosby, and the native pilot, George, with Corey's unit as a guard, set out on a reconnaissance to survey channels and beaches at the southern end of the atoll. They returned with a lot of helpful information and some supplies obtained from natives.

Gunnery Sergeant Charles E. Patrick of Salyersville, Ky., led a small patrol to ascertain if it might be possible to cross along the reef on the seaward side of the Japanese and thus outflank the enemy's position. One man was wounded during a contact with a Japanese patrol, and the Japanese fled into the brush. Patrick returned with the report that the crossing

might be made but it would entail some casualties.

Plans were made for an attack in force, and arrangements were made with the battered but gallant ship to bomb the Japanese at 8 a.m. the following day. The Recon Marines were filled with a great admiration for the ship's commander and his crew. Their ship was grievously wounded but they were carrying on their orders of supporting the land operation.

At 3:30, on the morning of the third day ashore, the units moved up to positions just across the reef passage and about 150 yards from the Japanese. Lt Silverthorn, the 10 Army soldiers, LT Crosby and Lt Hard were left to guard the beachhead. Corey set up the machine guns directly opposite the center of the Japanese lines. This was to provide a base of fire from which the others could hit the flanks.

The ship started off the fireworks by opening up with 6-inch salvos from 4,000 yards into the enemy positions. The Marines also started shooting and the Japanese replied with remarkably intense machine-gun fire. The vessel fired 70 rounds with fair accuracy, but evidently the shelling wasn't inflicting many casualties on the Japanese for their fire continued unabated. Capt Jones radioed a request that the firing stop.

Meanwhile, the firefight across the reef passage rose in fury. From 8 a.m. until 3:30 p.m., the heavy firing never ceased. Like most Japanese gunners shooting from entrenchments, their machine-gun fire was higher than it should have been. As long as the Marines kept prone, they were comparatively safe. PFC William D. Miller, a husky BARman, was wounded by machine-gun fire while in an exposed position. Private Bert E. Zumberge attempted to reach his wounded friend but was shot twice in the upper left arm while administering first aid. Corpsmen Morris C. Fell and James E. Fields exposed themselves to fire several times trying to haul Miller to safety. Miller was hit again and died before his body could be recovered.

The superstructures of numerous American ships appeared on the horizon, so Capt Jones decided to break off the firefight for a while until some mortars arrived. The convoy approached the entrance to the lagoon and it was seen to include numerous men-of-war, transports and two hospital ships.

The firefight across the reef passage rose in fury. ... Like most Japanese gunners shooting from entrenchments, their machine-gun fire was higher than it should have been. As long as the Marines kept prone, they were comparatively safe.

youngsters, walking with high-bosomed pride. These good people seemed delighted to see the Marines, and they confirmed the information about the Japanese force on Islet "Z."

There was a thin sandspit protruding to the northeast out into the lagoon from Islet "X." This spit commanded a view of the Japanese fortifications, said the Apamamese. Jones crossed to the spit with the company. Three Japanese arose from hiding places on the spit and one was killed at about 200 yards by a Marine rifleman. The company then came under light machine gun fire, and the other two Japanese escaped, crossing over to Islet "Z."

It was only an hour until sunset. The tide was coming in. Jones decided his men were in an unfavorable position, so he broke off the fight and returned to Islet "X." He stopped by the mission near Kabangake Village and talked with the four Catholic priests and the two Australian nuns. The captain's interview with the missionaries was

Jones decided that he would go out in the little motor launch for a conference with the commanding officer of the occupying troops. He set out across the lagoon with Maj Hunt, LT Crosby, George, the native pilot, and Sergeant Daniel J. Bento of Stoughton, Mass., aboard. Maj Hunt, being the only Annapolis man in the crowd, was appointed coxswain.

When they reached the entrance to the lagoon and were about a mile from the ships, a strange thing happened. The entire convoy suddenly got underway and went over the horizon. Apparently, they had gotten a lot of submarine contacts and were taking no chances on being attacked while off the atoll.

The men in the launch were left alone. And off to their right about 700 yards, appeared the “feather” of a submarine periscope.

“Submarine!” yelled Maj Hunt.

“And, undoubtedly a Japanese, too,” said LT Crosby.

“What do the Americans discuss, Mr. Hard?” said George, in Gilbertese, to the interpreter.

“Yonder in an underwater craft is a group of the Japanese,” explained the Australian.

“My word! Under the water.”

The submarine didn’t molest the men in the tiny boat so they turned around and headed back for Islet “X,” arriving

back at the beachhead at about 6 p.m.

A destroyer had appeared on the other side of the atoll and had sent an officer ashore. The destroyer had agreed to shell the Japanese positions on the following morning. But early on the morning of the fourth day, the Marines began to get some strange reports from the natives.

“The Japanese are all dead,” reported one tall English-speaking Apamamese boy. And, then puffing the cigarette that Lt Hard had given him, the boy went on to tell how the Japanese commanding officer had made a long speech to his men, waving his Samurai saber and brandishing a pistol.

“We shall kill all of the American devils!” howled the Japanese leader.

Then the officer’s pistol exploded, apparently accidentally, and he received a fatal wound in the belly. By late afternoon of the third day of the Marine landing, all of the Japanese who hadn’t been killed by shellfire, machine-gun fire or rifle fire, committed suicide in a mass ceremony.

More natives came in to verify this report. Lt Corey’s unit crossed the reef passage. They found one of those messy scenes which you see on almost every island operation of the war. The Japanese had dug themselves graves, laid down in them and killed themselves with pistols. Most of them had neat,

round bullet holes in the throat, just below the jaw.

The Marines started burying their enemies. This mass suicide was a puzzling thing to the boys. The Japanese had plenty of ammunition left. Each man still had from 10 to 40 grenades. They could have sold their lives for a high price in American lives. Yet they elected to slay themselves without offering further resistance.

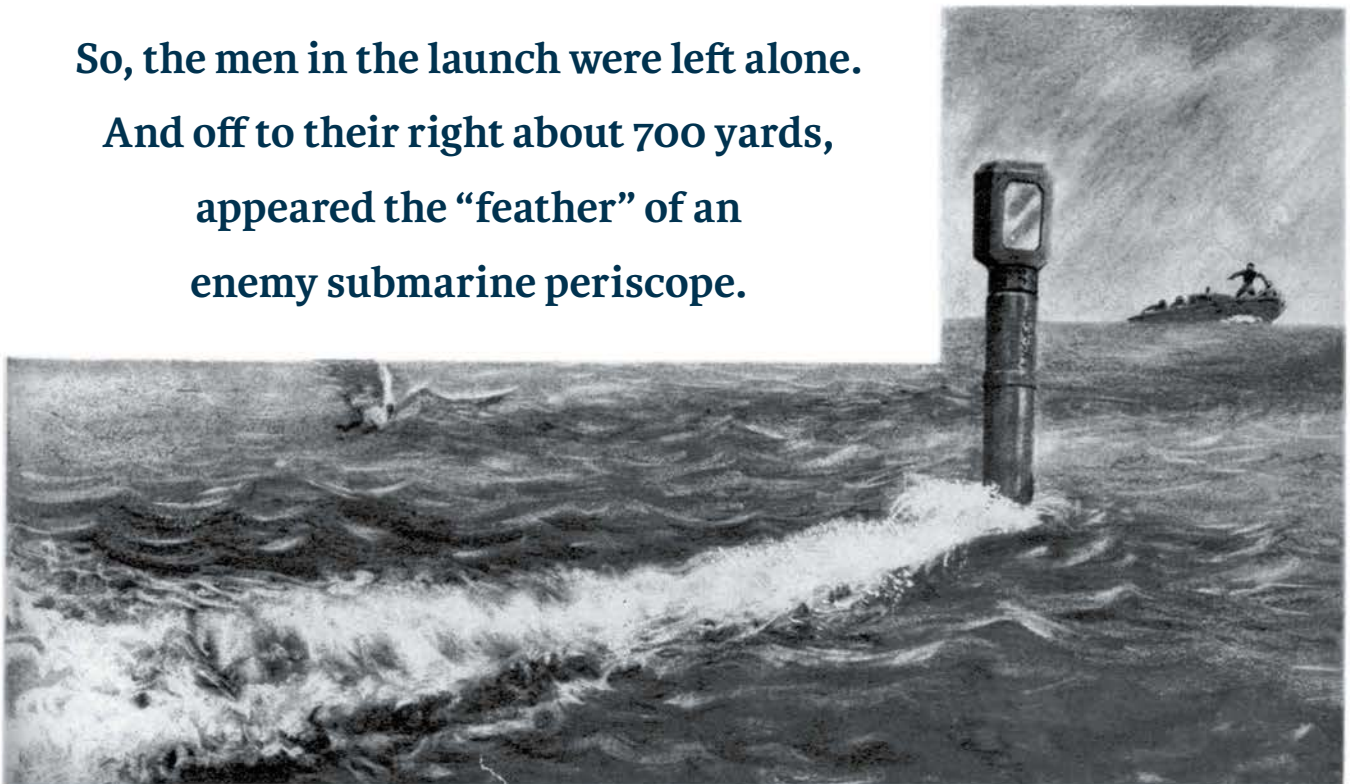
Out of the coconut groves, with their graceful, barefooted strides, came some young and curious Apamamese—athletic-looking, wide-eyed boys and girls with flowers in their straight, waist-length hair and grass skirts or sail cloth knotted around their tan hips. But these youngsters started helping on the burial detail with a will. They sang hymns in English, and the hymns made the Recon Marines a little homesick. But they didn’t feel so badly, soon, around the friendly Apamamese.

All over the atoll, the people were leaving their hiding places and singing hymns and returning to their thatched-roofed homes. And soon cooking fires were lighted in the red evening dusk.

The trade winds blew in coolly. Girls were singing “Brighten the Corner Where You Are” with their missionary school British accent.

Apamama—The Atoll of the Moon—had been liberated. 🇺🇸

**So, the men in the launch were left alone.
And off to their right about 700 yards,
appeared the “feather” of an
enemy submarine periscope.**



Still Need to File? MilTax Can Help

Filing taxes can be a daunting task every year, but the Defense Department has helpful resources for active-duty servicemembers and their families—and they're all free through Military OneSource.

MilTax, the DOD's approved tax-filing and tax-support service for the military,



offers tax preparation and e-filing software as well as personalized support to deal with issues such as deployments, combat and training pay, housing and rentals, multistate filings and living overseas.

"They can connect with a [tax] consultant during the tax season, and even past [it], through October, but in addition to having that live support walking through the filing process and asking questions that are specific to the military around taxes, they're able to access the MilTax software," said Kelly Smith, program analyst with the DOD's Office of Military Community and Family Policy. MilTax consultants are available virtually.

An advantage to the MilTax software, Smith noted, is that it's designed and tailored for the military community. E-filing allows servicemembers to file their federal returns along with up to three state returns at no cost.

"That's huge in the military community because our families are [going through permanent changes of station] and moving multiple times," Smith added, emphasizing that the MilTax services are designed to make tax filing a stress-free experience.

"[People] can rest assured that they are working with tax professionals who know and are familiar with military tax situations," she said, adding that many MilTax consultants return to offer their services every year, which provides con-

tinuity and added understanding of the unique needs of members of the Armed Forces.

As of Jan. 15, this year's tax deadline for filing 2020 tax returns is April 15 although last year it was extended to July 15 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. If there is an extension this year, Smith said MilTax is prepared for it.

"Our staff and our consultants are positioned to fill in the gaps where there may be additional need for that support online and over the phone," Smith said.

MilTax availability runs until mid-October for servicemembers who need extensions.

"That's simply because we know that the tax season usually ends in April, but for our military community, sometimes people are overseas or they are in a combat zone, and, so, they're able to file those extensions, and [we are] there to help them file their taxes

at a later time," Smith added.

Smith said she is not tracking any significant changes in tax law for the 2020 filing year that would affect servicemembers and their families.

"But the 2020 Social Security tax deferral is a big thing at this time," she

noted. "We are referring and connecting filers with [the Defense Finance Accounting Service] and with the IRS regarding questions and concerns they have outside of the tax deferral."

MilTax can also guide its military filers who have questions surrounding the economic stimulus package from 2020.

"I want to ensure that our servicemembers and families know they can turn to MilitaryOneSource and the tax service as a trusted source, and [MilTax services] understand taxes as it relates to the military community," Smith said.

For more information on MilTax, visit www.militaryonesource.mil/miltax-software/.

Terri Moon Cronk

Officials: "No Place in DOD for Extremism and White Supremacy"

There is no place in the Defense Department for those who espouse extremist views, DOD officials said in a Jan. 14 statement.

In the wake of the siege of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, DOD leaders re-emphasized that the department has zero tolerance for servicemembers or employees engaged in extremism, white supremacy, or who belong to organizations that look to overturn the U.S. Constitution.



LCpl Jorge Cuji, left, prepares a tax return at the tax center at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, Arlington, Va., in 2013. Military servicemembers can use DOD's approved tax-filing and tax-support service, MilTax, to file their federal and state returns at no cost.

“We ... are doing everything we can to eliminate extremism in the Department of Defense,” said Gary Reed, the director for defense intelligence and counter-intelligence, law enforcement and security. “DOD policy expressly prohibits military personnel from actively advocating supremacist, extremist or criminal gang doctrine, ideology or causes.”

All military personnel, including those in the reserve components, have undergone background investigations and are subject to continuous evaluation, Reed said. “Simply put, we will not tolerate extremism of any sort in DOD,” he added.

Reed’s statements came on the heels of an extraordinary memo from the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That memo reminded servicemembers of their oath to “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.”

Domestic extremists invaded the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 in an attempt to derail Congress from counting the votes of the Electoral College. That mostly symbolic vote declared that Joseph Biden won the 2020 election and would become the next president of the United States on Jan. 20.

Some in the crowd that broke into the Capitol were military veterans, and news



LISA FERDINANDO

reports suggested that there may have been active-duty members in the crowd as well. The DOD works diligently to ensure that those who espouse extremist views do not end up in the services, senior DOD officials said.

Officials examine those who wish to join the military, speaking to family, friends, teachers, workmates and more before they are allowed to pledge their oath to the Constitution, one official said. Some may slip through the cracks, but the department has continuous training and observation to detect these people.

“We work very closely with the FBI to identify any current or former military personnel engaged in domestic extremist behaviors,” the official said.

Some military personnel are seduced by the violent militia behavior according to the official. The rise of extremism in the general population affects the DOD.

“There has been a resurgence of white supremacy and white nationalist activity over the past five or six years,” he said.

These groups actively seek to recruit military members to their causes. Other groups “actually encourage their members to join the military for purposes of acquiring skills and experience,” the official said.

Officials said that the former acting defense secretary, Chris Miller, had ordered a review of all policies, laws or regulations concerning participation by servicemembers in extremist organizations.

“This review will result in a report and recommendations concerning any initiatives we could put forward to more effectively prohibit extremists or hate group activity,” the official said.

Jim Garamone



Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan Task Force Leatherneck (2009 - 2010) Reunion

With continuing COVID impacts, the Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan / Task Force Leatherneck Reunion has been rescheduled for 13-15 May 2022, at Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA.

For a meaningful reunion of combat veterans and their families, we want to have it when conditions allow maximum participation and the ability to gather without social distancing concerns.

For more information visit
Facebook.com/2dMEBAfghanistan

To pre-register for the event visit
mca-marines.org/task-force-leatherneck-reunion

For any further information you can contact the
Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan / TF Leatherneck Reunion Committee at
taskforceleatherneck@gmail.com



USS *Oklahoma* Marine Accounted For

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) announced recently that Corporal Elmer E. Drefahl, 22, of Milwaukee, Wis., killed during World War II, was recently accounted for.

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

From December 1941 to June 1944, Navy personnel recovered the remains of the deceased crew, which were subsequently interred in the Halawa and Nu'uuanu cemeteries.

In September 1947, tasked with recovering and identifying fallen U.S. personnel in the Pacific theater, members of the American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) disinterred the remains of U.S. casualties from the two cemeteries and transferred them to the Central Identification Laboratory at Schofield Barracks. The laboratory staff was only able to confirm the identifications of 35 men from *Oklahoma* at that time. The AGRS subsequently buried the unidentified remains in 46 plots at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), known as the Punchbowl, in Honolulu. In October 1949, a military board classified those who could not be identified, including Cpl Drefahl, as non-recoverable.

Between June and November 2015, DPAA personnel exhumed the USS *Oklahoma* unknowns from the Punchbowl for analysis.

To identify Drefahl's remains, DPAA scientists used anthropological analysis. Additionally, scientists from the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System used mitochondrial DNA, Y chromosome DNA, and autosomal DNA analysis.

DPAA

Cpl Leslie C. "Les" Barnett, 90, of Idaho Falls, Idaho. He enlisted in 1948 and served two years. He was recalled to active duty six months later in July 1951. He served in the Korean War and was assigned to I/3/1, 1stMarDiv. He was wounded during an engagement with the enemy near Hanjon-ni. After the war, he had a 30-year career with IBM, retiring as a staff engineer.

SgtMaj Robert W.E. Beyersdorf, 99, of Menominee, Mich. His 30-year career in the Marine Corps included service in three wars.

He enlisted in August 1940 and was assigned to the 7th Defense Bn in Samoa to prepare defenses for the island in early 1941. During WW II, he participated in the fighting on Roi-Namur and Iwo Jima with the 4th Tank Bn, 4thMarDiv. During the Korean War he served with the 1st Tank Bn, and after the war, he was the senior enlisted member of the crew testing and evaluating Ontos. From 1967-1968 he served a tour in Vietnam as the sergeant major of 3rd Amtrac Bn. In his last assignment before retiring, he was the sergeant major for TBS at MCB Quantico.

His awards include the Navy Commendation Medal with combat "V."

LtCol William H. "Bill" Bowers, 70, of Houston, Texas. He was a Marine Corps aviator. In 1976, he was assigned to VMFA-323 and VMFA-112 as a RIO for the F-4 Phantom. In 1979, he flew missions in support of Operation Eagle Claw. He later had a 30-year career with NASA where he had numerous roles, including astronaut photography trainer, lead writer for the space shuttle operations manual, and safety engineer for the space shuttle and the international space station. He was a graduate of Navy Fighter Weapons School.

He was a member of the Collings Foundation, which preserves historic aircraft, including the Phantom.

Kenneth W. Carlson, 82, of Genoa City, Wis. He served in the Marine Corps and later had a career in the Army.

Sgt Marguerite "Peggy" Cavin, 97, of San Diego, Calif. After her 1940 graduation from high school, she got a job at the Watertown Arsenal in Massachusetts where she was a lathe operator. She enlisted in 1943 and completed cooks and bakers school at MCAS New River. Trans-

ferred to Marine Corps Air Depot Miramar, she was a chief messman for the remainder of the war. She was a member of the WMA and MCL.

Sgt Dorothy (Schmidt) Cole, 107, of Kannapolis, N.C. She tried to join the Navy during WW II, but she didn't meet the minimum height requirement, so she began taking flying lessons and earned her pilot's license in hopes of becoming a Marine Corps pilot. She was one of the earliest Marine Corps Women's Reserve volunteers when she enlisted in 1943. As she told a reporter for the *Independent Tribune* in a recent interview, after boot camp, "they put me behind a typewriter instead of an airplane."

After the war, along with her husband, she began a career at the Ames Research Center in California.

Braswell Deen Jr., 95, of Alma, Ga. He enlisted during WW II and was assigned to Co K, 3rd Bn, 1st Marines, 1stMarDiv. He saw action on Peleliu and Okinawa. After the war, he attended college and law school. He was elected to the Georgia General Assembly as a legislator from 1951-1960. In 1965 he was appointed to the bench as a judge of the Georgia Court of Appeals.

Benjamin L. DeWitt, 79, in Allison, Iowa. He enlisted in 1966 and served a tour in Vietnam. He later served in the Navy as a Seabee.

Bernard J. Dolan Sr., 74, of West Chester, Pa. He and his twin brother enlisted together, and he was an infantry Marine in Vietnam. He has ties to *Leatherneck* magazine; his niece is editor Col Mary H. Reinwald, USMC (Ret).

Paul L. "PJ" Johnson, 72, of Moscow, Idaho. He was a Marine who served in Vietnam. He was a squad leader for 2nd Plt, "India" Co, 3rd Bn, 26th Marines. He saw action on Hill 881 South at Khe Sanh.

CWO Samuel J. Jones, 94, of Piggott, Ark. He was a veteran of three wars. He was a rifleman on Iwo Jima and during the Korean War he served as a forward observer for an 81 mm mortar platoon. He served a tour in Vietnam where he was the group adjutant of 1st Combined Action Group and the acting commander of a combined action company.

W. Wallace Kaenzig, 100, of Cologne, N.J. He graduated from Rutgers University in 1942 and enlisted during his senior year. He served with 4thMarDiv in the Pacific during WW II and saw action on Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima.

He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War and served until 1968. During his 26 years in the Marine Corps, he commanded three battalions including 3rd Bn, 10th Marines and 4th Bn, 10th Marines. He earned his master's degree in education, and after his retirement, he joined the staff of Atlantic Cape Community College.

Glen Lafenhagen, 91, in Urbana, Ill. He was a veteran of the Korean War who was an active member of the MCL Richard L. Pittman Det. #1231, serving as detachment chaplain.

Sgt Theresa M. "Terry" Longmire, 90, of Paterson, N.J. She attended Rutgers University before enlisting.

Rodney L. Lovellette, 83, of Effingham, Ill. He enlisted after his 1955 graduation from high school. He later had a 45-year career with the U.S. Postal Service. He was a member of the MCL.

MGySgt Ronald "Ron" P. Loy, 80, of Newport, N.C. He was a Marine who served for more than 32 years on active duty and in the Marine Corps Reserve.

John Moon, 103, of Macomb, Ill. He enlisted after Pearl Harbor was attacked and served in the Pacific. He was wounded on Iwo Jima 13 days into the battle.

Lenel Moore, 95, of Ashtabula, Ohio. He was a Montford Point Marine who

served in the Pacific and saw action on Iwo Jima.

Albin Nelson Jr., 94, of Burlington, Iowa. During his 25 years in the Marine Corps, he fought in three wars. He served in the South Pacific during WW II and saw action on Iwo Jima. He was wounded during the Korean War and received a Purple Heart.

He later had a career with Burlington-Northern Railroad and was a volunteer at the Marion, Ill., VA hospital. He was a member of the MCL and the 5thMarDiv Association.

MSgt Regis R. Toar Tinsley, 74, Henderson, Tenn. He served two tours in Vietnam. Other assignments included recruiting duty.

MSgt John Richard Verhaal, 92, of Ogden, Utah. During his 30 years in the Marine Corps, he served in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He was a member of the Marine Corps Shooting team.

PFC John A. "Jack" Wasemann, 94, of Wheeling, W.Va. He enlisted in 1943 at the age of 17. He was assigned to 1stMarDiv when he saw combat on Okinawa. He also served in China after WW II ended.


Col Frederic Thurman Watts Jr., 96, of Pinehurst, N.C. He was a pilot who flew

combat tours in WW II, the Korean War, and in the Vietnam War. During his 27-year career, he made more than 200 carrier landings. His awards include the Bronze Star with combat "V," the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart.

GySgt Robert D. "Bob" Vetter, 81, of Kearney, Mo. He enlisted when he was a high school junior and completed boot camp during his summer vacation. He returned home, finished school and got married. His 20-year career included two tours in Vietnam. He later taught auto classes to high school students. He was a member of the MCA.

Sgt Thomas Frank Williams, 88, of Laurel, Miss. He served in the Korean War and was wounded during a firefight on July 4, 1952.

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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D-Day: "The Longest Day" Normandy-Paris

JUN 12-25

Cathedrals of Northern France—Normandy

JUL 31-AUG 5

"Bloody Tarawa"

AUG 1-9

Guadalcanal Op Watchtower

AUG 14-27

Germany—"Rise & Fall of the Third Reich"

AUG 21-31

Vietnam I-Corps with SgtMaj Overstreet

AUG 26-SEP 8

"Footsteps of Easy Co" D-Day-Bridge Too Far-Bulge

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SOUND OFF
[continued from page 6]

At the time we were not too happy to see platoons form up after us and graduate before us.

Marine boot camp was one of the most memorable events in my life. If I had to do it all over again, I would not change a thing. The Marine Corps made a man of me and gave me direction in life. Last year I published a book, "Hollywood Marine," detailing my boot camp experience.

Sgt Douglas Morris
USMC, 1965-1971
Degraff, Ohio

Mount Out!

What in the world is a mount out? When I first heard these two words, I thought the Marine Corps must use horses. I joined the Marine Corps in October 1962 when the Cuban Missile Crisis started. I wanted to get in as soon as possible and wanted to go to Cuba. I went down to the recruiter and was processed into the Corps within a few days. However, before I even graduated from boot camp the Cuban Missile Crisis was over.

The battalion I joined was one of the battalions that had been sent to Cuba. The men were salty and told stories of how it

was on the battle lines. The truth was, they never saw action.

A mount out in the Marine Corps means you prepare for military action. Sometimes it's for real and sometimes it's for training to see how long it will take to actually get ready. The old salts told of the mount out to Cuba, how they secured all mess halls and shut down the whole camp. One Marine thought it was going to be just another practice run. When they actually landed at Guantanamo Bay, he realized it was for real.

In August 1963, my battalion was shipped to Okinawa for a 13-month tour. We were some gung-ho grunt Marines. We loved training in the jungles of northern Okinawa. It was in December when someone pushed the panic button and another mount out was ordered. Where to? Vietnam? In a few hours, everything was in order and we were ready to go. The next day the mount out was called off. We never knew if it was just a drill or if the Corps was contemplating sending us to Vietnam.

Later, our regiment left Camp Pendleton to board ships in San Diego. Was it for real or just a drill? It took eight days to get to Hawaii, which was longer than usual. There was a lot of scuttlebutt too, like we were going to Hawaii and then back

to California, or that we were going to Okinawa for training and then back to California.

We arrived at Hawaii and given overnight liberty. I thought, "What a beautiful place God has made." The next morning as our ship pulled slowly out of Pearl Harbor, our battalion commander ordered all Marines to come topside. As we stood there looking towards beautiful Hawaii, our battalion commander said, "I have called you all topside because I want you to look at America. For some of you this will be your last look." A feeling of fear swept across us.

A few weeks later some of those men that "looked at America for the last time," were dead, killed in Vietnam. These were good men who were well trained and who were proud of their heritage. We had trained to fight and to win, but in Vietnam we were denied victory.

Cpl Jerry Winger
USMC, 1962-1966
Joplin, Mo.

There Are Plenty of Coincidences In the Corps

In the late 1950s, part of my squadron was sent to a mountain overlooking Kure, Japan. We occupied what had been an anti-aircraft position in World War II. Our



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commanding officer, Colonel Gregory, told me his F4U had been shot at from this position while he attacked the Kure Naval Base.

Charlie Darr and I were promoted to captain the same day, so we passed out beer to the troops. Later we learned the sentry was on the roof, drunk with his M1 Garand. We disarmed him and were very angry that he had been so stupid to drink and go on duty with a rifle. We needed to punish him, but we had provided the beer. A senior sergeant told Charlie and me he would take care of the punishment. We did not ask him what that would be.

In one of many examples of how small the Marine Corps is, many years later at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport I was talking to two Delta pilots. I asked them what they flew in the Marine Corps. They said GVs [the pre-1962 designation for KC-130F]. I asked them if they knew Charlie Darr. They said, "Colonel Darr was our CO in Vietnam."

Peter Walker
Welches, Ore.

Once a Marine, Always a Marine

Several times in the past year the term, "Once a Marine, always a Marine," has been cited. The Commandant even mentioned it. As a young staff sergeant,

I fully grasped the concept. While discussing this with friends at the staff club at Twentynine Palms, the base sergeant major informed us, as only a sergeant major could do, that the title Marine is given up if a less than honorable discharge were issued. I would like to hear some other opinions on this matter.

Maj Earl Wayne Hacker, USMC (Ret)
Blacksburg, Va.

• As much as I dislike correcting a sergeant major, there is no policy or directive that "rescinds" the title of Marine once it is earned, regardless of type of discharge. Marines who bring dishonor upon the Corps through criminal behavior whether on active duty or as a veteran Marine, sad to say, may still claim the title but the rest of us don't have to associate with them.—Editor

K/3/3 on Hill 861A

I was in the Republic of South Vietnam on April 13, 1967. My platoon, the first platoon of "Kilo" Co, 3rd Bn, 3rd Marines, was descending from a failed attempt to seize and secure Hill 861A, a key piece of real estate 3 miles from the combat base at Khe Sanh.

I was a 12-year staff sergeant serving as a platoon leader, a job normally given

to a lieutenant, but "Kilo" Co was, like most rifle companies, short of officers. We received an intelligence briefing saying the hill was probably occupied by several observation posts and to keep track of the activities below Khe Sanh. Our job was to run them off the hill. The company moved out with my platoon in the lead, followed by the second and third platoons which later peeled off to approach Hill 861A from another direction.

We snaked our way to the top using a well-worn dirt trail. I halted the platoon and notified the CP that I was arranging the platoon on a skirmish line to prepare the assault. Now that frontal fire power was in place, we began inching our way forward in order to open fire. Before I could give the order, the entire hillside opened up with plunging, almost grazing, automatic weapons and small arms fire. Mortars followed. I immediately knew there was a well-entrenched military force.

Months later we learned that 861 was occupied by a reinforced North Vietnamese battalion. We were outnumbered by about 12 to one. In less than two minutes, my platoon had taken nearly 40 percent casualties including all three squad leaders and three corpsmen who had moved forward without being called. We

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spent the night in a tight, nervous defense position wondering what the next day would bring. I spent an hour on the radio talking with the Skipper about my situation. We both agreed that I had no other option than to hold my position. He sent the reserve platoon forward to help evacuate casualties the next day. That left me with about 16 trigger pullers to hold the line.

The cruel Vietnamese sun rose early, and word came over the radio to withdraw. I rounded up what was left of my platoon and in silent jubilation began the downward trek back to Khe Sanh. The enemy sensed we were withdrawing and opened fire with small arms and their 82 mm mortars. The company reached the base of the hill without difficulty.

Once out of range of enemy fire, the skipper halted the company column to allow us to eat rations and redistribute ammunition and ordnance. I looked to my right and saw a lone enemy figure standing by himself just below the ridge-line watching us as we moved downhill. I was carrying my radioman's rifle, one of the new M16s, and took aim. Aware of the weapons limited range of 350 meters, I raised the sights just above his head and fired. To my surprise he fell face downward on the hill in front of him. Word quickly got out that I had shot and killed a NVA soldier at more than 300 meters. The range seemed to increase every time the story was repeated.

Weeks later, the battalion was back together at our former patrol base just north of the Rockpile. A tall, rather handsome, athletic-looking captain who just finished lunch in the mess tent got up and was ready to leave when one of the

troops approached him and pointed me out saying I was the guy who killed the soldier at the range of 400 meters. The shot, according to the old maps which were printed in feet not meters and my measurements, was just over 340 yards. The captain who commanded Lima Co, 3/3, looked at me and said, "Lucky shot, huh?" I was angered and wanted to say to him, "Lucky? No way in hell! I used the principal of parallax to make the shot." However, I kept my mouth shut in case I wound up in his outfit someday.

That tall captain happened to be John Walter Ripley, who later would be decorated with the Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism in destroying the bridge at Dong Ha by setting 500 pounds of explosive charges while under enemy fire. Ripley left Vietnam after receiving the Silver Star, Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

My final meeting with Col Ripley was at 3/3's reunion years later which took place in Arlington, Va. We had a tour of Arlington National Cemetery where we placed flags on former Commandants' grave sites.

Every Marine active duty or retired should read the book about Col Ripley, "An American Knight," by Norman Fulkerson available at the Marine Corps Association by emailing: customerservice@mca-marines.org, or by calling 888 237-7683. GySgt C.R. Shoemaker, USMC (Ret) Prescott, Ariz.

Some Gave All

I am the brother of Private William Niader, USMC who was KIA on June 12, 1945, on Kunishi Ridge, Okinawa. I wrote this poem on May 18, 2001, in memory of him.

He had just turned 19 and was
in his prime,
When his life was taken before its time.
There were so many things
he wanted to be;
There was a great big world
he wanted to see.

You are only young once, and
it's time to have fun,
But the country's at war, and
they give you a gun.
You love your country,
so whatever will be,
Even if it means fighting on land
or on sea.

He thinks of a wife who will
hold him tight;
He thinks of children, asleep
in the night.
He would go back to school and
get his degree;

A man can be anything in this
land of the free.

He could take lessons and
learn how to fly,
To be like the birds, soaring high
in the sky.

He could become a preacher,
or write a poem,
Or become a carpenter and
build you a home.

He could work with the sick
and help make them well,
Or go into a business, whose products
he'd sell.

He could become a musician
and play in a band,
Or become a politician and
help run this land.


He could become a teacher and
help kids with their dream,
So everyone in this country will work
as a team.

When his parents got old,
in the twilight of life,
He would take care of them,
with the help of his wife.

When he was in battle,
he did find time to write,
"Please don't worry about me
as I go into the fight;
I love you all dearly and
will all the time."
But God had plans for this Marine
in his prime.

He was my older brother and also
my best friend;
Even with his death, those thoughts
never end.
The years go by, and I think of
him still;
He gave his life for his country,
a Marine called Bill.

He died so young, and the world
will never see,
What could have been will never be.
Frank Niader
Clifton, N.J.

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 

Reunions

Editor's note: The following reunion information was current as of Feb. 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.

• **USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn.**, Sept. 15, Warwick, R.I. Contact John Wear, 16605 Forest Green Terrace, Elbert, CO 80106, (719) 495-5998, johnwear2@verizon.net.

• **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 13-15, 2022, 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**, June 10-13, 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

• Sgt Mike Cutini, (716) 868-2531, kmcmme@roadrunner.com, to hear from anyone who served with **3rd Plt, Co D,**

1/26 from May 1968 to February 1969.

• Walt Stewart, 4408 Deer Knoll Rd., Raleigh, NC 27603, waltstwr@aol.com, to hear from or about **Sgt J.D. TRIBBLE** from Dallas, Texas, who served in **1st Plt, Co A, 3rd Amtracs, RVN, 1967-1968.**

• Ken Haney, kenhaney79@gmail.com, to hear from or about **SSgt Jim JOHNSON**, a Vietnam veteran who was a supervisor at the brig at **MCRD Parris Island, S.C.**; earned seven Purple Hearts and retired in 1978.

• SgtMaj Frank E. Pulley, USMC (Ret), fepulley@aol.com, on behalf of Marine veteran Dave Schulgen, to hear from or about **SSgt LONG**, whose MOS was 1141 and who was an instructor at the **Basic Electrician Course/Marine Corps Engineer School at Courthouse Bay, MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C.**, in **February-March 1979.**

• Ed Walsh, eireish1@aol.com, to hear from any member of **1st Tank Bn, OEF 11.2**, who is interested in acquiring a battalion photograph he has.

Wanted

Readers should be cautious about sending money without confirming authenticity and availability of products offered.

• Dennis Guernsey, 2115 Lapine St., Portage, IN 46368, dennis.guernsey@comcast.net, wants a **platoon photo and recruit graduation book for Plt 3092, San Diego, 1971.**

• Sgt William Chad Barber, (864) 327-6604, masc998256@gmail.com, wants a **platoon photo and recruit graduation book for 2nd Bn, Parris Island, Oct. 30, 1990-Jan. 25, 1991.** Platoon number is unknown.

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

Saved Round

By Jonathan Bernstein



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

THE JOHNNY GUN—The M1941 Johnson light machine gun was acquired by Marine Raider and parachute battalions in 1942 as a lightweight, automatic weapon that fired the same .30-06 cartridge as the M1903 and M1 rifles.

The M1941, known as the “Johnny Gun,” was innovative for its time, featuring a locking cam bolt. The weapon fed from a single stack, 20-round box magazine that engaged horizontally on the left side of the receiver but could also be fed simultaneously from the right side by five-round stripper clip. This gave better sustained and consistent fire performance over even the Browning Automatic Rifle.

The Johnson’s biggest flaw was the closely machined tolerance on the quick-release barrel. The fit between the cooling jacket and the barrel flange was so tight that it would easily jam if obstructed by sand. Operating on islands in the South Pacific was quickly found to be an issue. However, Johnson gunners loved the weapon because it was lightweight, accurate and easy to maintain. The Johnson was almost exclusively a Marine weapon, but one U.S. Army unit, the American/Canadian 1st Special Service Force, traded 2 tons of RDX explo-

sives with the Marines in exchange for 200 Johnsons. The Marine Raiders and parachute battalions reluctantly gave up their M1941s by 1944, when the Johnny Gun was replaced by the weapon it was intended to supplement, the M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle.

The National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., has an M1941 on display in the World War II gallery. It belonged to a Marine who saw action with the 22nd Marines on Okinawa. The machine gun in the photos above is not currently on display, and its provenance is unknown.

Author’s bio: Jonathan Bernstein is the Arms and Armor Curator for the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Previously he was the Director/Curator of the Air Defense Artillery Museum. Bernstein began his museum career in 1991 at the USS Intrepid Sea Air & Space Museum and has served in a number of museum roles since then. Bernstein was an Army Aviation Officer, flying AH-64A and D Apache attack helicopters with 1-104th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, PA NG from 2006-2012. He has also published a number of books and articles on military and aviation history.

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