

MAY 2021

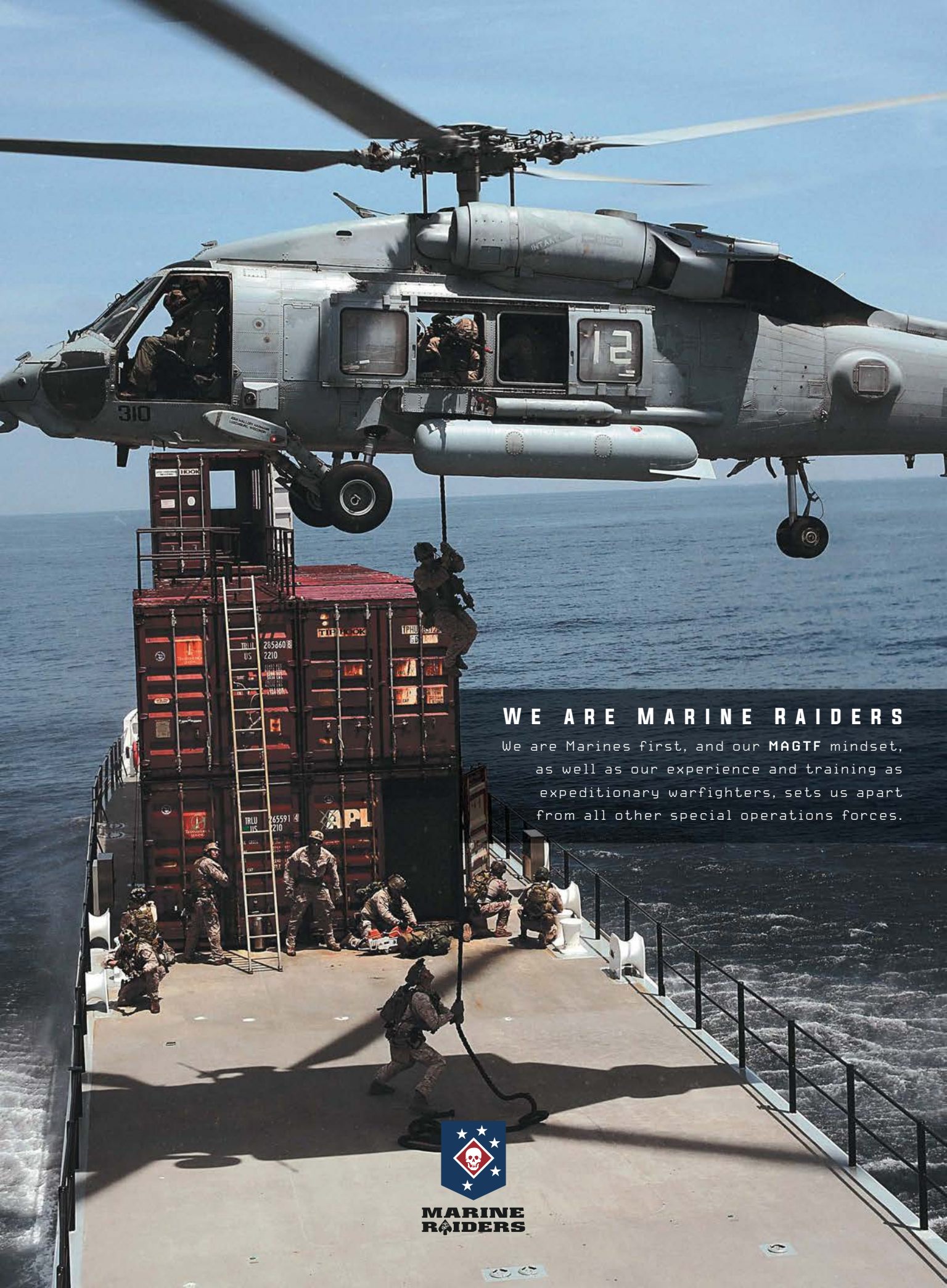
MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

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From the Editor's Desk

The staff of *Leatherneck* takes great pride in publishing a variety of stories and articles each month designed to capture the Corps of today while also remembering and honoring those who have gone before. We're especially excited about this month's issue which has a special cover. The cover features the painting "Remembrance of Valor" by Nicole Horn. Our unofficial artist in residence, Nicole also painted the classic "Semper Fidelis" that was featured on the cover of our 100th anniversary issue in November 2017. While this month's cover obviously honors those we have lost and is a beautiful tribute to Memorial Day, "Remembrance of Valor" also evokes other memories, some poignant, some happy, others proud.

Those who have served do a lot of remembering as our time in the Corps draws to a close and as we get older and look back on our service. Social media makes remembering easier in some ways as digital pictures and stories can be easily shared on the computer, or even on our phones. Technology makes it easier than ever to reminisce with those who we haven't seen for years, if not decades. If we're lucky, someone posts a picture of our platoon from recruit training or Officer Candidates School, and we remember both the pride and the fear we all experienced when we stepped on the yellow footprints at Parris Island or San Diego or crossed the railroad tracks into Brown Field. And then we start a trip down memory lane and think about the first time we deployed or the first time we went to the range (and what shooting badge we earned) or the first time we came in contact with the enemy. We remember the last times too. The last time we saw a friend before he PCS'd back to the States, the last time we left a duty station and watched it fade away in the rearview mirror, and of course, the last time we took off the uniform. Those memories and our reverence of them are part of our fabric as Marines—they are how we keep the Corps' history and our own history alive in our hearts.

It was with this theme of remembrance in mind that we asked Nicole to paint a series of cover images over the next several years. We were eager to again partner with Nicole given her exceptional talent and the outstanding response we received from the "Semper Fidelis" painting. She understands service, sacrifice, and loyalty and is able to capture those precious qualities exceptionally well through her art. Her paintings will be on our May and November covers in honor of Memorial Day and the Marine Corps Birthday, respectively,



ABIGAIL WILSON

Artist Nicole Horn paints the first in a new series of covers for *Leatherneck* in her studio in Stafford, Va., in late February. Horn also painted "Semper Fidelis" which was used as the cover for the 100th anniversary issue of the Magazine of the Marines.

for the next few years. We'll offer copies of the paintings as posters and signed prints through The Marine Shop, as they are issued. Our hope is that these works of art will be used as simple and elegant decorations in the homes of Marines for years to come.

Our goal in commissioning these paintings is to provide a unique and special means by which *Leatherneck* readers, MCA members and others can reflect on their time in the Corps and the Marines with whom they've served and also to provide special mementos to remind us all of what it means to be a Marine.

Mary H. Reinwald

Mary H. Reinwald
Colonel, USMC (Ret)
Editor, *Leatherneck*



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COVER: From Nicole Horn, the artist who painted “Semper Fidelis,” for the 100th anniversary cover of *Leatherneck*, this month’s cover, “Remembrance of Valor,” is a new painting honoring our fallen servicemembers this Memorial Day. Copies of the painting are available at www.Marineshop.net. 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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A NEW USMC PRINT IS HERE "REMEMBRANCE OF VALOR"



From the Artist who painted "**Semper Fidelis**", featured on the 100th anniversary cover of *Leatherneck Magazine*, "**Remembrance of Valor**" honoring our fallen servicemembers is coming to The Marine Shop. A limited run of signed prints will be available starting this Memorial Day.



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Letter of the Month

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

The February issue of *Leatherneck* featuring the battle of the 4th Marine Division on the Island of Roi-Namur brought back memories. I was in 24th Regiment landing on Namur. On the second day the island was secured and I was assigned to a small detail to locate any fallen Marines in the wooded and brush area. Up ahead and to my right was a large block house. The only opening was a steel door at the front. I noted three Marines running to put explosives at the base of the concrete wall. They set the charge and ran back yelling, "Fire in the hole!" I took cover just below ground level which protected me from the shock wave. Then all hell broke loose. I was bouncing like a rubber ball. Black smoke was heavy and thick. When I could see again, I was in

a huge deep hole with water at the base. No part of the blockhouse could be seen. What an experience for my first battle.

On page 52 there is a photo of the five Marines from Co F, 2nd Bn, 24th Marines. The Marine without a helmet was a friend and I'm sorry to say he was killed at Iwo.

I apologize for not having a better written letter. My hand shakes a lot and at times I can't hold a pen. Last month I reached my 100th birthday. Colonel, you and your staff do an excellent job in putting out *Leatherneck* each month.

George V. Carroll
Littleton, Colo.

• *Sir, we always enjoy hearing from our readers but it's a special honor to receive a letter from a World War II Marine, especially one who fought on Iwo Jima. Your letter is a wonderful addendum to our February story. Thank you for writing. And Happy Birthday!—Editor*

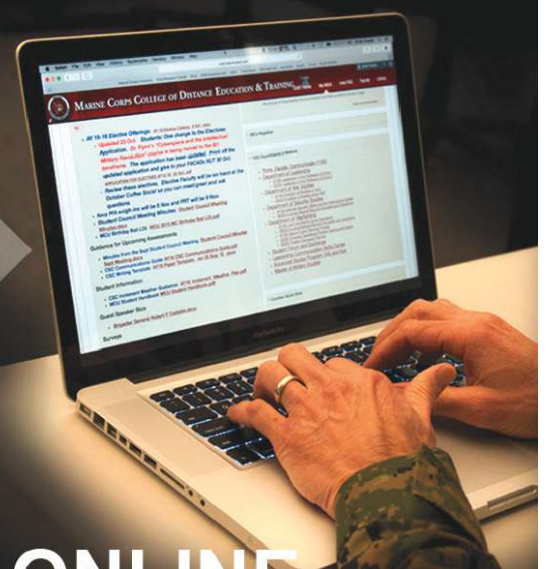
A Haircut and a Life Lesson

Oral "Ben" Correll, the local barber who cut my hair in the small town of Oblong, Ill., when I was a kid, had fought and was wounded on Iwo Jima with A/1/28 during World War II. I always looked up to him for being a Marine and for being friendly. He had a homespun philosophy and a way of telling a story I'll never forget.

When I was 9 or 10 years old in the late 1940s, I asked him to give me a haircut like the Marines got when they went to boot camp. He laughed and said, "Does your dad know you're going to get it cut like that?" "Oh, yeah," I said, lying quickly. "We came to town to get the truck greased, and he gave me 50 cents to get my hair cut. He's playin' pool." Ben spread the apron over me with flair, like a bullfighter spreading his cape in the front of a charging bull, tied the tie around my neck, took the clippers and made three or four swipes over my head. After the hair fell to the ground, he untied the string, shook the apron, and with a twinkle in his eyes said, "How's this?" I looked in

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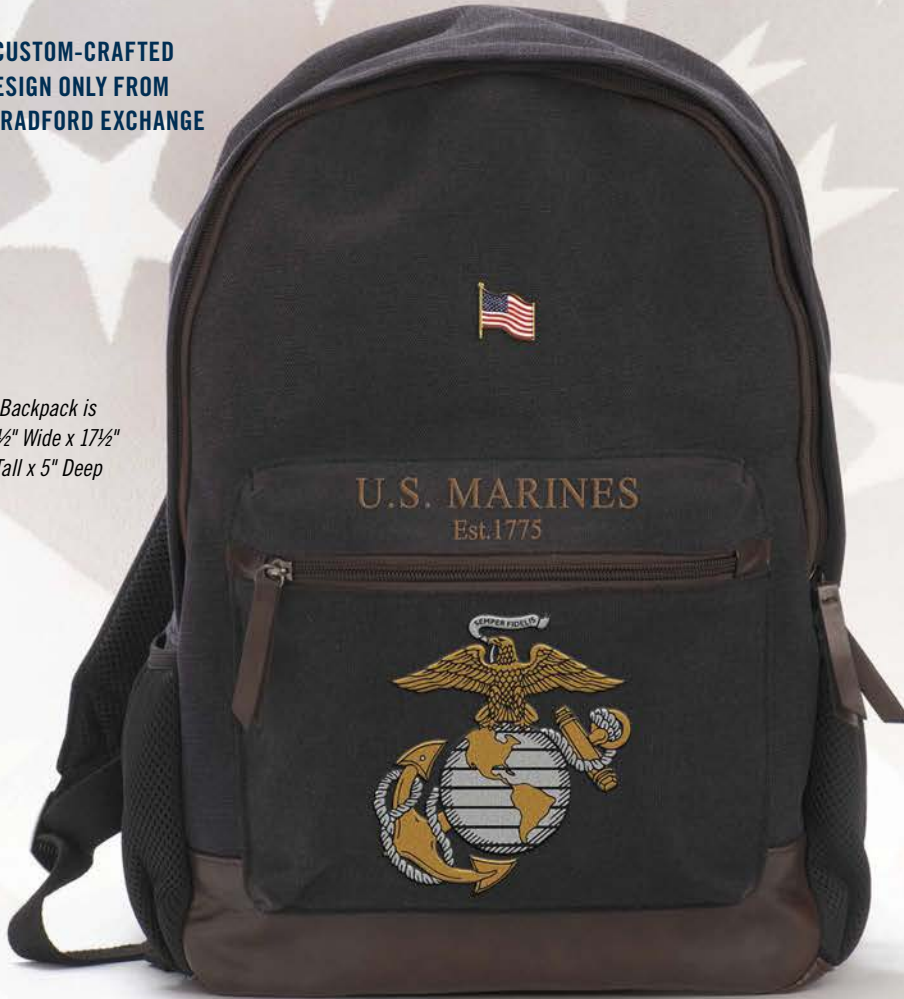
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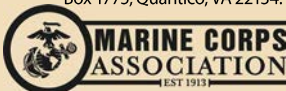
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the mirror behind him and said, "That's good. That how you looked after you got your boot camp haircut?" "Something like that," he said laughing again when I handed him a half a dollar for the haircut. "Here, you better have a dime today to get a double dip of ice cream." He usually gave me a nickel in change.

My father didn't say a word until we got a mile or so north of town. Then he turned to look at me and said, "You look like a striped-assed ape." That's all he ever said. Ben laughed when I told him that the next time I got a haircut.

As I grew older, I asked him about Iwo Jima. It was years before he would say much, but once when I came home on leave from the Marine Corps and stopped by the barbershop to talk with him, he told me about getting wounded on D+3 and getting taken to the hospital ship. I recorded it:

"As I was being winched over the side of a hospital ship the next morning, I turned on my side and looked back at the Rock. It was just before noon. And there on the top of Suribachi, a bleak sky in the background with the sun's rays shining on it just a little, was one of the most beautiful sights I'll ever see. The flag stood out in technicolor against the drab background. It had to be the second flag," he said, his eyes watering as he spoke. "But it was a real tearjerker. I'll never see anything like it again."

Ray Elliott
USMC, 1958-1961
Urbana, Ill.

HMX-1 Presidential Helicopter Guards

This is in response to Sergeant Howard W. Evers' question in the February Sound Off about Marine One having two Marines present at the presidential helicopter. I served at HMX-1 from 1985 to 1988 as a guard. Part of providing security 24/7 is also being at the locations the President is leaving or arriving on Marine One. One Marine is an MP (on the right in gear) assigned to the unit and does not fly onboard when the President is traveling but will be onboard in transit. The other is the crew chief (left side) that does stay onboard taking care of the aircraft. I did many front door lifts and stood for President Reagan and Vice President Bush.

Cpl John Magers
Shelby, Ohio

Mindless Term?

Regarding the November 2020 article, "Football Phenoms" by Colonel Keith Oliver, and a response by Gary Wilk in the January issue, both contain the incorrect term All-American. Col Oliver and I

have been friends for 40 years and when I contacted him in regard to his excellent article, he readily admitted his mistake, said he knew better and ascribed the error to something "... probably age-related."

When an athlete is selected to a national team, he or she is and remains an All-America, just as it says on the certificate of award. An All-City or All-State selection does not become an All-Citizen or All-Statian. The term All-American in this regard makes absolutely no sense.

Certainly, Grantland Rice, Curt Gowdy, or Keith Jackson never used this mindless term.

Maj R.E.G. Sinke Jr., USMC (Ret)
Quebec, Canada

• According to the "Associated Press Stylebook," "use the term All-American when referring specifically to an individual" as we did in the November 2020 article by Col Oliver. Had we referenced the team rather than the player, we would have used the term All-America. A seasoned journalist and public affairs officer, Col Oliver would certainly be on board with our adherence to the book known in the business as "the journalist's bible."—Editor

How I Ended Up in the Corps

I enjoyed the stories about how people ended up in the Marine Corps [Sea Stories, November 2020 and Sound Off January 2021]. After two months of grad school, I recognized I wasn't ready for more school. I decided that my choices were the Peace Corps or the Marine Corps, and since I had a buddy running for the Quantico cross-country track team, I decided I'd have a better chance to run in the Marine Corps. We did form a team in Pensacola but not in Vietnam.

Capt R.D. Ramsay
Steger, Ill.

A Marine's Prayer

A Marine's prayer on the eve of battle is not, "Lord spare me," but rather, "Lord let me not prove so unworthy of my brothers and sisters." To have pride, honor, integrity, the chance to be part of esprit de Corps with the history of service, valor, and glory, to have comrades who would sacrifice their own lives for you as you would for them, and to know that you remain part of this Marine brotherhood and sisterhood as long as you live.

Civilians cannot understand and seem to wonder at the passion displayed by the wounded warrior to get back to their units and once again return to the fight, but it is not a marvel to Marines that men and women who have been wounded still consider themselves fit for battle so

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powerful is this king of passion to return to their brothers and sisters and not let them down. They who stand by me in battle and shed their blood in battle with me shall be my brother and sister in the Marine brotherhood and sisterhood for eternity.

Cpl John Messia Jr., USMC (Ret)
1952 to 1954
Brockton, Mass.

Ship Name Was Incorrect

I suspect that I am not the first person to point out that the caption for the photo at the bottom of page 25 in the February issue of *Leatherneck* is incorrect. While the exact name of the ship is impossible to determine just from the photo, I assure you that she is not USS *Nassau*, much less a ship of that class. The ship is of the *Iwo Jima* (LPH-2) class.

As an aside, I teach Navy JROTC at a local high school. We have a subscription to *Leatherneck* which the students and I look forward to reading every month. It is a great magazine. Keep up the good work.

CDR Richard L. Moncada, USN (Ret)
El Paso, Texas

• You were, in fact, the first and only one to point out the mistake. Thank you and thanks for continuing to serve as a

Navy JROTC instructor. JROTC is an outstanding program across all the services and we're happy to hear that your students enjoy the magazine.—Editor

Ka-Bar Gift

All Marines in battle wear a Ka-Bar knife. Harry Switzer and my brother, Bill, were on stretcher duty at the battle of Kunishi Ridge in June 1945. They had just



COURTESY OF FRANK NIADER

This Ka-Bar, owned by Harry Switzer, was gifted to Frank Niader, the brother of Bill Niader who was KIA on Kunishi Ridge in June 1945.

brought in a wounded Marine and were going back for another when a Japanese shell exploded near them. My brother was killed, and Harry was wounded. Harry later wrote my parents a letter about the incident. When my mother died in 1992, I found Harry's letter. I decided to find him even after all those years. I finally found him in California, and we had a good talk. He sent me the Ka-Bar pictured here that I now have on display in my home. Unfortunately, Switzer died years ago.

Frank Niader
Wayne, N.J.

Meeting With a Hero

The February *Leatherneck* [In Memoriam] marked the February 2020 passing of James L. "Les" Gadbury. Les served with C/1/9, 3rd Marine Division and saw action as a machine gunner on Bougainville, Guam and Iwo Jima. He also supported Felix de Weldon on the original Iwo Jima sculpture that is the centerpiece of the National Marine Corps War Memorial. A photo of Les appears in the center of Robert Leckie's book, "Strong Men Armed: The United States Marines Against Japan" with the caption, "Guam . . . another backbreaking fight for men such as this machine gunner weighed down with his weapon's tripod."

After reading his memoirs in 2019, I knew I had to meet Les and express appreciation for the sacrifices that he and his generation had made for our nation. As impressive as his service had been, I came away equally impressed with what had followed.

Like so many veterans of his generation, Les returned to civilian life committed to making the most of life's opportunities—college under the GI Bill, married the love of his life, Norma Gregory, high school business teacher, football coach, basketball coach, track coach and driver education instructor knowing full well the price his fellow Marines had paid. A life well-lived that produced five children, 14 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Yes, the United States Marine Corps trains young men like Les to become the greatest fighting force on this planet, but it also returns these men to families and communities where they lead exemplary lives embodying fidelity, valor and honor.

Sgt John C. Martin
USMC, 1970-1972
Decatur, Ill.

Ask Grunts About Tank Support

I served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969 with Companies B and C, 1st Tank Bn, gun and flames, supporting Marine grunts

working in the Go Noi Island, Dodge City, Arizona Territory. Instead of me complaining of how crazy I think it is to do away with tank units and supporting units and being biased, why don't we ask the grunts that we support if they want the Army supporting them rather than their Marine brothers supporting them. They know they can count on us no matter how bad things get and do it faster than any other branch of the military. I wonder what the powers that be were thinking when they rolled out this grey matter malfunction.

Douglas W. Scrivner Jr.
USMC, 1967-1971
Hamilton, Ohio

In October 1962 or so, America discovered Russian missiles about 90 nautical miles off American shores. The mobilization of all military branches and "spy" agencies was a sight to see. I was stationed at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton. I, along with about 20 other hospital corpsmen, went to the personnel office and volunteered to serve with the Marines as we were sure a war was about to start. We were told, "If we need you, we know where you are."

Being a Sailor and learning in boot camp that Marines and the U.S. Army

need transportation by air or sea to get to the war, some areas of the planet are best served by U.S. Marines and the U.S. Navy. Since the Earth is covered by water and most, if not all, wars are what we call overseas, it only makes sense to send every weapon of war that will kill and destroy the enemy. End result, we shorten the conflict and win the battle.

The United States developed the Abrams tank at a time when superior destruction of the enemy was needed, and I believe it is the best tank to date. As a civilian since February 1966, and a veteran, I want the best weapons used by our kids, grandkids and allies to win the war. It's a shame to see military folks who forget the history of war since 1775. It is and always will be a combined effort of taxpayers, the Armed Forces (all branches) and generals, enlisted and allies of common sense who will use our inventory of weapons to protect our troops in harms way.

When I was a kid, I loved watching "Victory at Sea" and watching our men hit the beach and watching the tanks supporting them. How many men lived as the tanks neutralized the Japanese, Koreans and North Vietnamese? I mention three geographic areas as examples of wars where Marines driving Marine tanks

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saved lives. Remember Ontos? I mean no disrespect, but the U.S. taxpayer bought the weapon system, let the Army, Marines and other branches be taught to use it. I will be writing Congress members to keep the best weapons in our quiver. Let your voice be heard in the halls of Congress. Protect our kids and grandkids.

John Sanchez
USN, 1961-1966
Hanford, Calif.

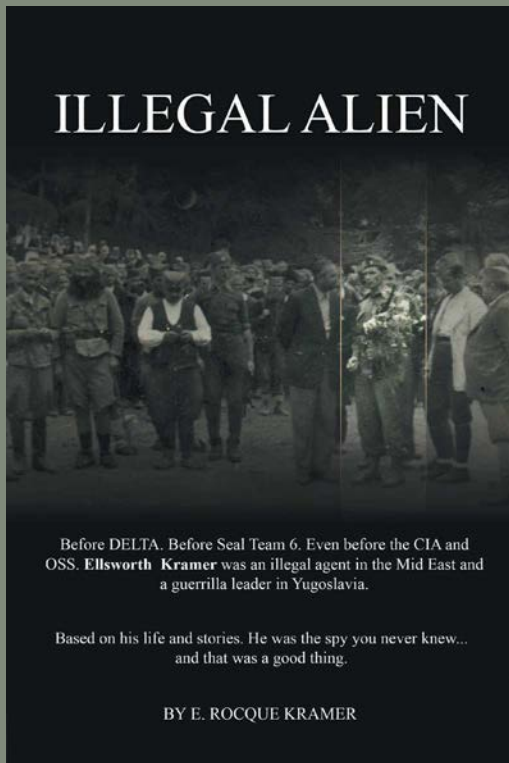
My First 72 Hours in the Corps

At 0800 hours on April 5, 1961, as requested, I was standing in front of the post office of my hometown waiting for my recruiter to pick me up and drive me to his office in Nashville, Tenn., to complete the enlistment process. On the way I mentioned that I heard they harassed you at Parris Island. He at first acted like he didn't know the meaning of the word and then said maybe for the first couple days and I shouldn't worry about it. Easy for him to say. We got to the office and met up with three other guys from other towns in middle Tennessee. We spent the day doing paperwork, getting sworn in and killing time. Sometime in the late afternoon we were walked to the railroad station, given our orders and a couple meal tickets, and instructions on how to find the bus depot in Atlanta and told what time we better be there. We got to Atlanta early on the morning of the 6th and had several hours to kill before our bus left in late afternoon. We passed a tattoo parlor and one of the other guys decided that since we were now in the Corps, he would get a Devil Dog tattoo. When we got to the island and they saw the bandage on his bicep, they knew what he had done. To say he caught extra hell is an understatement but that is another story.

When we got on the bus in Atlanta there were several other guys who were also headed to P.I. and we picked up a few more at different stops on the way. One of them was a big, tall guy who had played basketball at Western Kentucky. There was a lot of laughing and talking until it got dark. We could tell we were getting close to our destination and the last hour was really quiet. None of us knew precisely what was coming, but I think we all sensed that a storm of some sort was on the horizon.

The bus made one last stop in Beaufort and some guy got on who was coming off liberty. He told us that things wouldn't be too bad unless we were put in 1st Battalion. I'm sure he knew that was exactly where we were going, and I suspect he had a lot of fun telling his buddies how he had just messed with the minds of some new recruits. Getting off the bus was a

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complete nightmare—yelling, screaming, getting on the yellow footprints, etc. We were finally able to hit the rack sometime in the early morning hours. I remember laying there and thinking that I had three years and 364 days to go and how in the hell was I going to make it?

At some point that day we were all standing in front of our racks and the DI asked anyone with prior military experience to take a step forward. A few guys did, as did my big, tall friend from Western Kentucky, who had been in Army Reserve. They hollered down to him and said, “What were you in?” His answer was, “Sir, ROTC, Sir.” You never saw a DI move so fast and in a few well-chosen words they let him know what they thought about his prior service.

The next morning, we jumped out of the rack and had to hold all our linens up over our heads. I hadn't been able to eat since we got there and with the blood draining away from my head, I fainted. When I came to, I remembered seeing the OD standing over me. I don't remember ever seeing another officer in our barracks and I suspect he was only there since we were first day recruits. He left and one of the DIs hit me in the back of my head and gave me hell for having the nerve to faint.

[continued on page 68]


RALLY UP

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A Memorial Day Tribute: The Ring

Story by Ron C. Suci

The lecture went as it usually seemed to. The college history class sat absorbed with the treatment I was providing World War I. They listened to the music I brought in from the period and looked with what appeared to be attentive consideration at the propaganda posters, photos and slides of that long-ago era. All in all, I was reasonably satisfied with the impact that the presentation was having on my students.

My intention on that particular day was to conclude the class by reading some of the poetry that had emerged from the Great War and, if nothing more, provide my charges with a touch of the emotion captured in the works of Owen, Service, Graves, Seeger and Sassoon. With the large lecture hall lights dimmed and the room quiet, I thumbed through the well-worn pages of old volumes and softly gave voice to the words of poets now long-dead who had once poured out with such painful eloquence the tale of that war which was intended to end all wars. The final offering of the session was a short piece by Siegfried Sassoon titled “Together.” Interestingly enough, the poem is not a treatise on the conflict, but rather the resurrection of a memory, a melancholy memory of a dead friend.

When I had completed the final reading and gently closed the book, I noted for the class that soldiers carried their dead and wounded with them from the battlefield, both figuratively and literally, and they carried them forever enshrined in some far recesses of their hearts. The survivors would carry their slain through time and remember, and remember, and remember. I went on to say that each day would bring a recollection of some youthful companion and the association forged in the fiery crucible of combat.



As is my custom, I asked for questions or comments. One young man politely asked if it wasn't just a bit of an exaggeration to suggest that those particular memories—memories of pain and anguish and such vivid images of death—would return every day, forever. As the assembled students waited for a response, I stood leaning against the lectern pondering my answer and slowly, ever so slowly, turned and studied the gold ring on my right hand.

So much of college teaching is an effort to capture the attention of the students as well as their imaginations. In so doing, at times one shares a bit of one's self. That sharing can illuminate and provide a reference point for a young mind, and it can also prove painful for the professor who revisits old wounds for the purpose of answering a polite and legitimate question. In the vernacular of education, the youngster's question had provided a “teaching moment.”



Writer Ron C. Suci (standing, left) visited Sgt Bateman's grave at Arlington National Cemetery with the sergeant's brothers and sisters. Kneeling, left to right: Tom Bateman, Winnie Abromwicz, Susan Greisz and, standing, John Bateman.

Glancing down at the ring I had worn for so many years, I slowly slid it from my finger and silently reread the inscription that I had read every day since I had earned the privilege of wearing that symbol of my college. Now was the time to share and to read the inscription for a college audience; it was time to risk a bit of pain to provide a bit of illumination.

The unfolding of the ring's story to my class was really very simple and uncomplicated. I had come home from Vietnam and returned to school to complete my college studies. Upon graduation I received my ring and ordered the inside inscription. Most of my classmates had the engraver enter their names and degrees. I, on the other hand, opted for something far more personal.

The inscription in my class ring reads,

*"Sgt. J.A. Bateman, USMC
K.I.A. May 1969
Vietnam."*

After I read the inscription to my students, the lecture hall was hushed and still. I went on softly to tell them a bit about Jim Bateman,



James A. Bateman

the young sergeant of Marines who lost his life during his second tour in Vietnam, more than 30 years before. I told them that every year since his death I make the trek to Arlington National Cemetery where he rests, and I pass a brief and quiet hour with my dearest friend.

My story continued as I told them my reasoning for inscribing his name on the inside of my ring.

I came home, you see, and he did not. I was blessed with the family, home and education that we both so wanted. His name is in my ring because in a small way I wanted him to share my journey and my life—and indeed he has.

The lecture concluded, and the students made their way out—all but one who lingered for a time. The lad who had asked the question remained. He graciously thanked me for the story and offered that obviously combat veterans do remember—and remember daily. He made his way down the hall, and I slowly returned to my office to reshelve the books of poetry, to sit quietly, to look at the inscription in my ring and to pass a brief moment with my dearest friend.

Editor's note: All photos are courtesy of Ron Suci.

Author's bio: R.C. Suci served with L/3/4 in Vietnam in 1965-1966 and was twice wounded. He earned his college ring at The Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina. He is now retired from the history faculty of El Paso Community College in El Paso, Texas.

In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

CAMP BUEHRING, KUWAIT From Ship to Shore, 15th MEU Rehearsal Tests Capabilities For Future Conflicts

The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit, embarked aboard ships of the *Makin Island* Amphibious Ready Group, conducted a theater amphibious combat rehearsal at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Jan. 28-March 4.

The TACR (Theater Amphibious Combat Rehearsal) exercise integrated U.S. Navy and Marine Corps assets to practice and rehearse a range of critical logistics, aviation and ground combat-related capabilities, both afloat and ashore, highlighting the expeditionary and quick-response capabilities of the MEU.

Sergeant Matthew Bolton, an embarkation specialist and unit movement control center chief for Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) 15, 15th MEU, was part of the team that ensured the safe and timely arrival of more than 1,000 troops and assets from ship to shore via Landing Craft, Air Cushions [LCAC] assigned to Assault Craft Unit 5.

“As an embarkation specialist, my job is to get everything off the ship, get everything where it needs to be and then track all movements beyond that,” said Bolton. “We’ve accomplished over 200 movements, supporting both the ground combat element and logistics combat element in over a dozen training areas.”

Once ashore at the Udairi Range Complex, a training area outside Camp Buehring, Marines and Sailors with CLB-15 established a forward operating base in a matter of days with everything from a medical clinic to a full-service fuel farm in preparation for training.

“As the CLB, we were able to execute 28 out of 34 core mission essential tasks in just under a month,” said First Lieutenant Adam Olson. “TACR allows commanders to have confidence in our ability to execute our core mission through tactical-level planning and strategic-level training.”

Once ashore, Marines and Sailors with the 15th MEU conducted a variety of vital training tasks to sustain and increase combat proficiency. Events included live-

fire ranges for crew served weapons, small-arms weapons, platoon and company attacks, fire and movement rehearsals, demolition ranges, motorized maneuver training for motor transportation operators and ordnance disposal training with explosive ordnance disposal technicians.

The MEU’s ground combat element, Battalion Landing Team 1/4, executed training from the smallest unit level to an entire company attack.

“We started with individual attacks and progressed all the way up to company level operations with adjacent units and attachments as well,” said Sergeant Michael Land, a squad leader with “Charlie” Company, BLT 1/4.

Adjacent units included the 15th MEU’s Combined Anti-Armor Teams, “India” Battery and Light Armored Reconnaissance Detachment. The company-level attacks were a culminating event for the entire BLT, calling upon multiple units to attack an objective together.

“We started by departing the assembly area during the day and made movement



Marines with Charlie Co, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU conduct a simulated assault as part of a company live-fire attack exercise during a TACR at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Feb. 21. (Photo by Cpl Patrick Crosley, USMC)



LCPL MACKENZIE BINION, USMC

Above: LCpl Miles Manske, a machine gunner with Weapons Co, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU, fires a .50-cal. machine gun during a TACR at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Feb. 17. TACR integrates Navy and Marine Corps assets to practice and rehearse a range of critical combat-related capabilities.

Below: Marines assigned to Charlie Co, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU conduct a night live-fire attack during a TACR at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Feb. 23. The 15th MEU is deployed to promote stability and security in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations.

to the objective,” said Land. “Once we destroyed the enemy at the objective we then moved into a defensive posture where we prepared for a possible enemy counterattack at night. At that point we also called upon supporting units to consolidate on our position to increase our lethality against the enemy.”

With so many participants and moving pieces, Land said it was an important learning experience for his Marines.

“This range helped the junior Marines understand how all of the elements of the BLT come together as one big picture,” said Land. “It helps them understand when to use indirect fire on the enemy to keep their heads down.”

This TACR marks the first land-based training exercise for the 15th MEU since completing similar sustainment training in Hawaii during their transit through the U.S. 3rd Fleet area of operations in November 2020.

Sourcing combat power ashore from a sea-based platform allows the ARG/MEU to be flexible, expeditionary and postured to shape actions across the full range of military operations in remote, marginally accessible environments.

The 15th MEU is deployed to the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations in support of naval operations to ensure maritime stability and security in the Central Region, connecting the Mediterranean and Pacific through the Western Indian Ocean and three strategic choke points.

Sgt Desiree D. King, USMC



CPL PATRICK CROSLLEY, USMC



CPL ADAEZIA CHAVEZ, USMC

PFC Payton DeLoach, a transmissions system operator with 2nd Maintenance Bn, utilizes an AN/PRC-160(V) manpack radio to perform various radio checks at MCMWTC Bridgeport, Calif., during Mountain Training Exercise 2-21, Jan 22. Marines train at the Center to prepare for the rigors of operating in harsh weather conditions, mountainous terrain and increased elevation.

BRIDGEPORT, CALIF. Cold Weather Training Prepares Marines for Operating in Harsh Environments

Tough and realistic conditions are necessary pillars to ensure U.S. Marines are trained well for the future fight.

From October 2020 to February 2021, various units with 2nd Marine Logistics Group, stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., participated in cold weather training thousands of feet above sea level at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif.

The Marines learned how to drive heavy tactical vehicles on rugged and steep trails; tack mules and use them to help resupply troops; practice how to shoot, move and communicate in deep snow; and were purposefully exposed to hypothermia.

The towering mountains of Northern California have altitudes up to 12,000 feet, and many find it difficult to survive the harsh conditions of both the summer and winter. At MCMWTC Bridgeport, Mountain Warfare Instructors (MWI),

identifiable by their red fleece caps and nicknamed “red hats,” have been trained to guide Marines as they learn to survive in austere terrain.

“With Yosemite being to the west of us, it’s not an uncommon thing to see rescue helicopters at the end of every weekend because a hiker has gotten lost or injured,” said Gunnery Sergeant Jones, a red hat at MCMWTC Bridgeport. “The difference when training units come to these mountains is that they have us to train them—to step on certain rocks vice others, or to practice safety, all the way down to the basics of using sunscreen.”

The MWIs are recruited from combat arms-related military occupational specialties within the Corps and go through both the summer and winter Mountain Leaders packages before earning the coveted red hat. Various courses are taught at the training center from horsemanship to sniper training and although the cold temperatures in winter are rough, MCMWTC Bridgeport offers challenging training all year long.

“Out of the 16 courses, I’d say that



CPL ADAEZIA CHAVEZ, USMC

Left: Marines with 2nd Maintenance Bn allow a Tucker-Terra Sno-Cat to pass during a hike to Grouse Meadows at MCMWTC Bridgeport, Calif., Jan. 24.

Below: 1stSgt Juan Gavilanes and LCpl William Huber extend a hand to Cpl Cruz Velez on a conditioning hike at MCMWTC Bridgeport, Calif., Jan. 19. (Photo by Cpl Adaezia Chavez, USMC)



Summer Mountain Leaders Course is the most physically and technically demanding,” said Jones.

Instruction offered in classes like the Basic Cold Weather Course act as force multipliers for the 2nd MLG as many of the Marines can now train their fellow teammates at home.

“During the two weeks that we attended the Basic Cold Weather Course, we learned how to keep others, as well as ourselves, alive in harsh winter conditions,” said Corporal Seaira A. Moore, a newly minted Basic Cold Weather Course graduate. “The Marines had an amazing way of instructing us in a way that made us feel safe even as we were induced into hypothermia.”

Some were even able to test their newly minted skills while training in the snow at Fort Drum, N.Y., during a cold weather exercise hosted by Combat Logistics Battalion 8.

“Leading the Marines here in New York made me see why the training that we did as BCWL [Basic Cold Weather Leaders] students is so important,” said Sergeant



LCPL SCOTT JENKINS, USMC

LCpl Gabby Seman tightens snow chains during a snow chains assembly course, part of a cold weather exercise at Fort Drum, N.Y., March 4. Following Basic Cold Weather Leaders Training at MCMWTC Bridgeport, Calif., the Marines of CLB-8 shared their knowledge by facilitating cold weather survival and motor transport courses at Fort Drum for Marines with 2nd MLG.

Wes Alvarez of CLB-8. “The ability to take what I learned back to the 2nd MLG, train the base line knowledge, and seeing how that improves us as a fighting force made those days and nights in the cold worth it.”

MCMWTC Bridgeport offers classes to every branch of the Armed Forces as

well as NATO forces on a regular basis.

“I think every Marine should have the opportunity to participate in at least one of the courses the MWTC has to offer during their Marine Corps career,” said Moore. “Not just for the skill set taught by the red hats, but for the overall experience.”

Cpl Rachel Young-Porter, USMC

PHILIPPINE SEA

During Joint Patrol, 31st MEU Demonstrates Nontraditional Use Of Expeditionary Platforms

The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, currently embarked aboard ships of Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 11, conducted joint patrols with assets from the Palau Bureau of Maritime Security, U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy in the Philippine Sea, Feb. 22-28.

The patrols were conducted to increase interoperability between the Marine Corps, U.S. Navy, Coast Guard, and Palau Marine Rangers in support of maritime security and to enhance crisis response capabilities in support of regional allies and partners. Throughout the duration of the patrols, the 31st MEU and PHIBRON 11 planned for multiple proof-of-concept exercises to test and develop new ways to use and integrate various maritime assets to mutually support one another.

In one such exercise, the 31st MEU demonstrated the ability to provide fuel from a nontraditional expeditionary support platform to both a Mark VI patrol boat from Maritime Expeditionary Se-

curity Squadron TWO and a combatant craft medium boat from Naval Special Warfare Special Boat Team 12, allowing for an extended sustainment while at sea.

Following the refueling operation, the patrol boats embarked with dock landing ship USS *Ashland* (LSD-48) and engaged in joint patrolling operations with Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry* (WPC-1140) and PSS *President H.I. Remeliik II* patrol boat in the vicinity of Palau.

While patrolling, 31st MEU and *Ashland* worked together to develop new ways to refuel and resupply the Mark VI boats at sea without reembarking them, utilizing combat rubber raiding craft to provide sustainment to the patrol boats when separated from the larger ships for extended durations.

On Feb. 26, the blue-green team conducted a counter-mine exercise with Navy and Marine Corps explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) personnel from Mobile Unit 5 and Combat Logistics Battalion 31, testing their ability to respond to objects that could restrict ship maneuver while patrolling. Aircraft with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 262 (Re-

inforced) transported the EOD team to the drop site near a simulated mine. EOD team members jumped from the air, swam to the objective and followed the proper procedures for safely neutralizing the target in order to allow freedom of movement for the larger vessels. The EOD team also conducted a hydrographic survey using unmanned underwater vehicles, which can be used to scan for mines.

The following day, the 31st MEU conducted another proof-of-concept exercise to test the effectiveness of firing various weapon systems from a smaller surface craft. During the exercise, the 31st MEU low altitude air defense (LAAD) team fired a FIM-92 Stinger missile from a Mark VI patrol boat, marking the first time this has ever been done. The LAAD team also integrated with aviation assets from VMM-262 (Rein), demonstrating the mutual supportability of a combined attack at sea from smaller expeditionary platforms than what has typically been practiced by maritime forces.

As the Marine Corps focuses on making its footprint lighter, more expeditionary and more survivable while retaining the



Marines with 2nd LAAD Bn, 31st MEU fire a FIM-92 stinger missile from a Mark VI patrol boat for the first time ever during a live-fire exercise in the Philippine Sea, Feb. 27. (Photo by LCpl Brienna Tuck, USMC)

ability to support the joint force and its partners from inside an enemy's threat ring, the 31st MEU is constantly looking for ways to increase its cooperation and integration with partners and allies throughout the region as well as with its U.S. Navy and Coast Guard counterparts.

"I am proud of the interoperability demonstrated with our sister services and with our partner nation of Palau," said Colonel Michael Nakonieczny, the commanding officer of the 31st MEU. "Our collective actions demonstrated an ability to partner to compete and compete to deter alongside our joint and allied partners and our commitment to remain ready and engaged in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to reassuring our commitment to a partner nation, this exercise allowed us to anticipate and test innovative solutions to the challenges we face daily in competition and that we will overcome, together, in conflict."

The 31st MEU is operating aboard ships of PHIBRON 11 in the 7th Fleet area of operations to enhance interoperability with allies and partners and serve as a ready response force to defend peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

1stLt Stephanie Murphy, USMC



1STLT STEPHANIE MURPHY, USMC

Above: A UH-1Y Huey with VMM-262 (Rein), 31st MEU, flies past USS *New Orleans* (LPD-18) prior to a live-fire exercise in the Philippine Sea, Feb. 27. The exercise was conducted to test the effectiveness of firing various weapon systems at sea from smaller, more expeditionary platforms than are traditionally used.

Below: Marines with the 31st MEU load ordnance onto an AH-1Z Viper with VMM-262 (Rein) aboard USS *New Orleans* in the Philippine Sea prior to a live-fire exercise, Feb. 27.



1STLT STEPHANIE MURPHY, USMC

“We Need 150 More John Smiths!”

The Legacy of a World War II Fighter Ace

By MSgt Jeff Dacus, USMCR (Ret)

Many fighter pilots, especially the early aces from World War I, were celebrated as great individualists, flying amidst the enemy, downing enemy aircraft right and left and earning personal glory. There were other pilots, less colorful and often less well-known, whose success lay in their aerial leadership as much as their individual prowess. Many Marine fighter pilots would owe their lives to one such pilot. He was dark-eyed John Lucien Smith.

An Oklahoma native, born in the small town of Lexington, John Smith graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1936. A natural leader, he was a member of the university's Army ROTC unit, and upon graduation, he was commissioned a second lieutenant and assigned to an Army artillery unit. A focused, hard-working young man, he decided to change services and switched to the Marine Corps in July of the same year. Two years later,

he was assigned to flight school, earning his wings in 1939.

When war broke out on Dec. 7, 1941, Smith was with VMF-221 aboard USS *Saratoga* (CV-3) en route to Hawaii. When the attempt to relieve Wake Island failed, the planes landed on Midway to supplement the defenses there. Smith was not there during the crucial Battle of Midway during the first days of June in 1942. He had been sent to Ewa Field in Hawaii to command recently formed VMF-223 on May 1, 1942. His new squadron consisted of many inexperienced pilots, but a few veterans would join them after the action at Midway. One such veteran was Marion Carl, who claimed one Zero in that battle. The veterans found VMF-223 hard to work as Smith pushed them to be combat-ready.

Often sardonic but always affable, Smith began training his men in the Navy's latest tactics learned during aerial combat at Coral Sea and Midway. The Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighter

Right: Maj John L. Smith in an aircraft cockpit at NAS Anacostia, Washington, D.C. in November 1942. He received the Medal of Honor for shooting down 16 Japanese aircraft in the Solomons in August and September 1942 while in command of Marine Fighting Squadron 223. (Photo courtesy of Naval History and Heritage Command)



Above: Maj John L. Smith, LtCol Dick Mangrum, and Capt Marion Carl stand next to a Wildcat at NAS Anacostia in November 1942. The three pilots toured various Marine Corps flying installations telling other Marine aviators what they had learned during aerial engagements with the enemy. (USMC photo)



Often sardonic but always affable, Smith began training his men in the Navy's latest tactics learned during aerial combat at Coral Sea and Midway.

A Marine Corps Grumman F4F Wildcat fighter at Henderson Field, Feb. 2, 1943. The markings under the cockpit indicate that the aircraft has been credited with shooting down 19 Japanese aircraft while being flown by several different pilots, including John Smith. (Photo courtesy of Naval History and Heritage Command)

Maj John L. Smith, Maj Robert E. Galer, and Capt Marion E. Carl each received a Navy Cross from ADM William F. "Bull" Halsey on Guadalcanal, Sept. 30, 1942.

was faster and more maneuverable than the VMF-223's Grumman F4F Wildcat and could also outclimb the heavier Grumman. A tough taskmaster, Smith taught his Marines the hard lessons learned by the Navy while fighting the Zero. One of the documents he used as a basis for the intense training was a treatise written by Navy Lieutenant Jimmy Flatley. "Our planes and our pilots, if properly handled," Flatley declared, "are more than a match for the enemy." He praised the F4F-4 Wildcat's "excellent armament [six .50-caliber machine guns], protected fuel system and greater strength ... Let's not condemn our equipment. It shoots the enemy down in flames and gets most of us back to our base ... Remember the mission of the fighter plane, the enemy's VF mission is the same as our own. Work out tactics on that basis. We should be able to outsmart him ..."

In addition to Flatley's writings, Smith incorporated the ideas of naval aviation heroes "Jimmie" Thach and "Butch" O'Hare. All three emphasized teamwork



NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

and the use of two-plane sections and four-plane divisions. Smith explained, "We spent as much time as we could flying on Saturdays and Sundays and every other day, doing gunnery and dummy runs and anything that would help give people quick experience or quick training.

It was the first experience I had trying to train anybody, but it seemed to me that gunnery was the most important thing. So, we concentrated on gunnery more than anything else, which was a good thing when we found out where we were going." He continued the intense training when

John L. Smith with the pilots of VMF-223 on Guadalcanal. Left to right, back row: H.K. Marvin, K.D. Frazier, John L. Smith, Marion E. Carl, C.S. Hughes and C. Kendrick (KIA). Front row, R.R. Read, F.E. Gutt, W.S. Lees (KIA), C.G. Winter, C.R. Jeans and C.M. Canfield, September 1942.



USMC

John L. Smith is pictured with a Wildcat on Oct. 10, 1942, the day he shot down a Rufe floatplane for his 19th and last victory of the war. (Photo courtesy of National Archives)

the squadron arrived at Efate in the South Pacific during the early summer of 1942.

On Aug. 7, 1942, Marines landed on the island of Guadalcanal to begin the long road to Tokyo and victory. Marines immediately set to work to make the island's crude airstrip, named Henderson Field after Maj Lofton R. Henderson, a Marine pilot killed at Midway, usable. On Aug. 20, Smith led his 19 F4F Wildcats and the dive-bombers of Dick Mangrum's VMSB-232 off the small carrier USS *Long Island* (ACV-1) to land on the primitive airfield.

The next day, they were in action. Previously, the Japanese had been bombing the American beachhead with impunity. On Aug. 21, they were surprised to be met by Smith's Wildcats, who claimed three enemy planes in their first combat. Smith received credit for one. He described his combat initiation, "We were flying down south of Savo Island heading toward Russell Island, and six Zeros came on to us about a half mile to our side and about 500 feet above us. I recognized them immediately as Zeros because of the silhouettes I'd seen, and we turned into them, and naturally they turned into us. From then on it's pretty hard to say what happened." Eventually, "they went off, because they were just as scared of us as we were of them." After that, the Japanese came over nearly every day, and the Marines learned more with every attack.

After each mission, Smith went over the flight with the pilots to review any lessons learned. He quickly learned what others had told him. The Wildcat was not equal to the Zero. "They had much more performance than we had. I think they did, we just couldn't stay with them at all, and dogfight at any altitude." He also learned how to fight them.

The more action the squadron encountered, the more they learned. Smith instructed his pilots to attack and then get away, avoiding the fighter escorts if possible. According to John Lundstrom's "The First Team and the Guadalcanal Campaign," Smith recalled, "It was our policy to hit the bombers one time—the whole outfit—then pull up to the left then look around. If the Zeroes had come over the top of bombers and could attack us, we'd go away." Smith pushed his pilots even as their numbers dwindled due to



He not only excelled at instruction, but he also proved to be a superb fighter pilot. On Aug. 29, 1942, Smith downed two Japanese bombers, his fourth and fifth kills to become the Marine Corps' second ace of World War II.

casualties and disease. He not only excelled at instruction, but he also proved to be a superb fighter pilot. On Aug. 29, 1942, Smith downed two Japanese bombers, his fourth and fifth kills to become the Marine Corps' second ace of World War II. Fellow VMF-223 pilot Marion Carl was the first Marine Corps pilot to

achieve ace status after shooting down a Betty bomber on Aug. 24.

Another dynamic mission occurred the next day. Late that morning, coast-watchers spotted a formation of Japanese planes en route to Cactus, the code name for Henderson Field. Smith led eight Marine Wildcats and four Army P-400s, a version of the P-39 Airacobra, into the air.

The Marines and soldiers clawed for altitude searching for the Betty bombers and Zeroes reported near the island. The Wildcats reached 15,000 feet, and the P-400s attained 12,000 feet when ground control told them they should be able to see the enemy. Suddenly, frenzied calls from the Army pilots indicated Zeroes had struck the Airacobras north of Henderson Field. Off in the distance, Smith saw about 20 dark brown shapes twisting and turning with the four light green American fighters.

Smith turned into the enemy planes and ordered each pilot to pick a target. As the Marines went to full throttle,



COURTESY OF NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

Seated, left to right: LtCol Richard C. Mangrum, Maj John L. Smith and Capt Marion R. Carl at a press conference in the Navy Department, Washington, D.C., shortly after their return from Guadalcanal, May 1943. Smith received the Medal of Honor for his actions during Aug. 21 to Sept. 15 when he shot down 16 enemy aircraft, contributing to Japan's inability to drive U.S. forces from Guadalcanal.

Smith glimpsed two parachutes floating down and the two remaining P-400s in furious maneuvers trying to escape their attackers.

The Wildcats turned their altitude advantage into more speed and rapidly closed on the unsuspecting Zeroes. Smith's four-plane division lined up behind the four-plane flight of Zeroes and opened fire. Smith nearly ran into his target as it erupted into a ball of flames and plunged to the earth shrouded in dark black smoke. The other three Marines also knocked down their targets.

Smith had taught his pilots to attack and then zoom up to regain important altitude, and they climbed higher after finishing off their opponents. He saw no sign of the Army fighters. He learned after the mission that all four Airacobras had been shot down. A lone Zero materialized as if by magic from a cloud just below him, and Smith sent it down in flames.

Smith met the Japanese pilot's challenge, and both pilots opened fire at about the same time. It was a game of chicken, with both pilots intent on killing the other either by gunfire or ramming.

Smith and his Wildcats slowly climbed in a circle high over Henderson Field. A single Zero appeared dead ahead, flying straight at the Marines. Smith met the Japanese pilot's challenge, and both pilots opened fire at about the same time. It was a game of chicken, with both pilots intent

on killing the other either by gunfire or ramming. Parts fell off of the Zero. It sprouted smoke and exploded in a fiery blaze.

Separated from his division, Smith returned to the field. Between his airplane and the runway, he saw a pair of Zeroes. He picked one and opened fire. The Zero spewed smoke and flame, then did a wingover, falling into the sea. The other Zero escaped.

That intense combat ended with 14 Zeros claimed by Smith's Marines. The Betty bombers turned back due to the clouds moving in over Guadalcanal. No Marine aircraft were lost. Smith was credited with four enemy destroyed.

The Japanese continued to pummel Henderson Field and the Marines on Guadalcanal. Nightly runs by Japanese ships shelled the Marine positions. Japanese ground attacks and long-range artillery fire added to the destruction. Sleep

was often impossible. Naval actions prevented supplies from reaching the island, causing shortages of food, ammunition and fuel. Disease and lack of food kept some of the pilots on the ground. Throughout it all, Smith continued to lead by example. Despite his serious demeanor, pilots called him “Smitty” or “John L.”

Smith shared his knowledge with each new unit that arrived. Army and Navy pilots, as well as fellow Marines, benefited from his expert instruction. Leaders like Hank Bauer, Joe Foss and Robert Galer, in turn, became teachers. They became aces by downing many enemy planes, but more importantly, they passed on what they knew to other pilots. Despite having few mission-ready aircraft—sometimes only six Wildcats were available—they continued to score against the daily Japanese raids. Smith would shoot down eight planes during September, including twin bomber kills on the 11th and 12th.

On Oct. 2, 1942, Smith scrambled to meet an incoming raid. He managed to set fire to a Zero that swept in front of him, but his Wildcat was badly damaged by enemy fire. He crash-landed 4 miles east of the airfield and successfully walked away from the wreck. He described his march back to Marine lines. “It was just like a hike. There were a few rivers to ford, of course. The whole trip took me just two and a half hours.” Unhurt but tired, he was frustrated at the loss of his lucky ball cap. Fortunately for him, Marines later found and returned his hat. His friend, Bob Galer, was shot down the same day and luckily returned to base safely.

In early October, Headquarters Marine Corps decided the pilots who had been at Guadalcanal since August would be shipped home. Smith flew his last mission on Oct. 10, when the squadron knocked down six Rufe floatplanes near Choiseul Island. Smith gained his final victory that day, destroying one of the floatplanes. The squadron received credit for destroying 83 enemy planes during Smith’s tenure as commander of VMF-223. He personally accounted for 19 of the downed airplanes.

At first, Smith refused to leave, explaining that his experience would help the newer pilots. According to historian Robert Sherrod’s, “History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War Two,” Smith was told he could return to combat but, “Not until you have trained 150 John Smiths.” On Oct. 12, he left the South Pacific for the States.

Smith was presented the Medal of Honor by President Franklin Roosevelt on Feb. 24, 1943. He toured Marine Corps’ air



The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the
CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR to
MAJOR JOHN L. SMITH
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

for service set forth in the following
CITATION:

“For conspicuous gallantry and heroic achievement in aerial combat above and beyond the call of duty as Commanding Officer of Marine Fighting Squadron TWO TWENTY THREE during operations against enemy Japanese forces in the Solomon Islands Area, August-September 1942. Repeatedly risking his life in aggressive and daring attacks, Major Smith led his squadron against a determined force, greatly superior in numbers, personally shooting down 16 Japanese planes between August 21 and September 15, 1942. In spite of the limited combat experience of many of the pilots of this squadron, they achieved the notable record of a total of 83 enemy aircraft destroyed in this period, mainly attributable to the thorough training under Major Smith and to his intrepid and inspiring leadership. His bold tactics and indomitable fighting spirit, and the valiant and zealous fortitude of the men of his command not only rendered the enemy’s attacks ineffective and costly to Japan but contributed to the security of our advance base. His loyal and courageous devotion to duty sustains and enhances the finest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

/S/ Franklin D. Roosevelt

installations with fellow veterans Marion Carl and Richard Mangrum to impart his firsthand combat knowledge to new pilots. He did return to the Pacific during combat operations in the Philippines in October of 1944 as executive officer of Marine Air Group 32, developing the best techniques in close air support. Smith finished the war stateside at a training command.

After WW II, he served in a variety of assignments, including spending a year in Korea, and held staff positions with the Chief of Naval Operations, NATO and Headquarters Marine Corps. He graduated from the National War College and was a member of the Advanced Research Group at the Marine Corps Schools in Quantico, Va. Throughout this time, he managed to continue flying. He finally

retired on Sept. 1, 1960. In civilian life, he worked in various aviation companies.

Smith died on June 10, 1972. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery. A gifted aviator, excellent leader and accomplished fighter pilot, John L. Smith was remembered by many as the Marine who taught them how to fight the Zero.

Author’s bio: MSgt Jeff Dacus, USMCR (Ret) is a retired Marine tanker and public school teacher. He is the recipient of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation 2020 General Roy S. Geiger award, and is the author of the new book, “The Fighting Corsairs: The Men of Marine Fighting Squadron 215.” He lives in Vancouver, Wash.

Creating Smarter, Tougher Riflemen

Corps Overhauls Infantry Training

CWO Zachary Dyer, USMC and LCpl Kerstin Roberts, USMC

“Quite simply, you will be the best trained Marines to ever leave ITB. Fact. No Marine has ever spent this much time or got this much training.”

With these words, Lieutenant Colonel Walker Koury, the battalion commander for Infantry Training Battalion (ITB), School of Infantry (SOI)-West, welcomed new Marines at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 25, and introduced them to the brand-new Infantry Marine Course (IMC).

IMC is the pilot program for the Marine Corps’ new entry-level infantry training pipeline. The new Marines of “Alpha” Company, ITB, spent the next 14 weeks learning the skills they need to be riflemen, machine gunners and antitank missilemen.

Taking the direction that was given by

the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General David H. Berger, in his 2019 Commandant’s Planning Guidance and Force Design 2030, SOI combat instructors developed IMC’s program of instruction over the last year with a focus on creating young infantry Marines with the tactical skills and cognitive abilities to operate in the expeditionary and dispersed environments of future conflicts. By using a fundamentally different approach to training, ITB leaders hope to give the Corps’ newest infantry Marines the freedom of thought and freedom of action they’ll need to operate independently and successfully, said Chief Warrant Officer 3 A.J. Pascuiti, the battalion gunner for ITB.

“Through freedom of thoughts and freedom of action, they’re able to employ whatever it is we’ve taught them along the way,” said Pascuiti. “So they’ll have a



PFC Carlos Quintana, a student with “Alpha” Co, ITB, SOI-West, shoots an azimuth with a lensatic compass during land navigation training while participating in the pilot program for the new Infantry Marine Course at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 16. The course uses a redesigned learning model to develop Marines’ capabilities for independent and adaptive thought and action on the battlefield.

LCPL ANDREW CORTÉZ, USMC

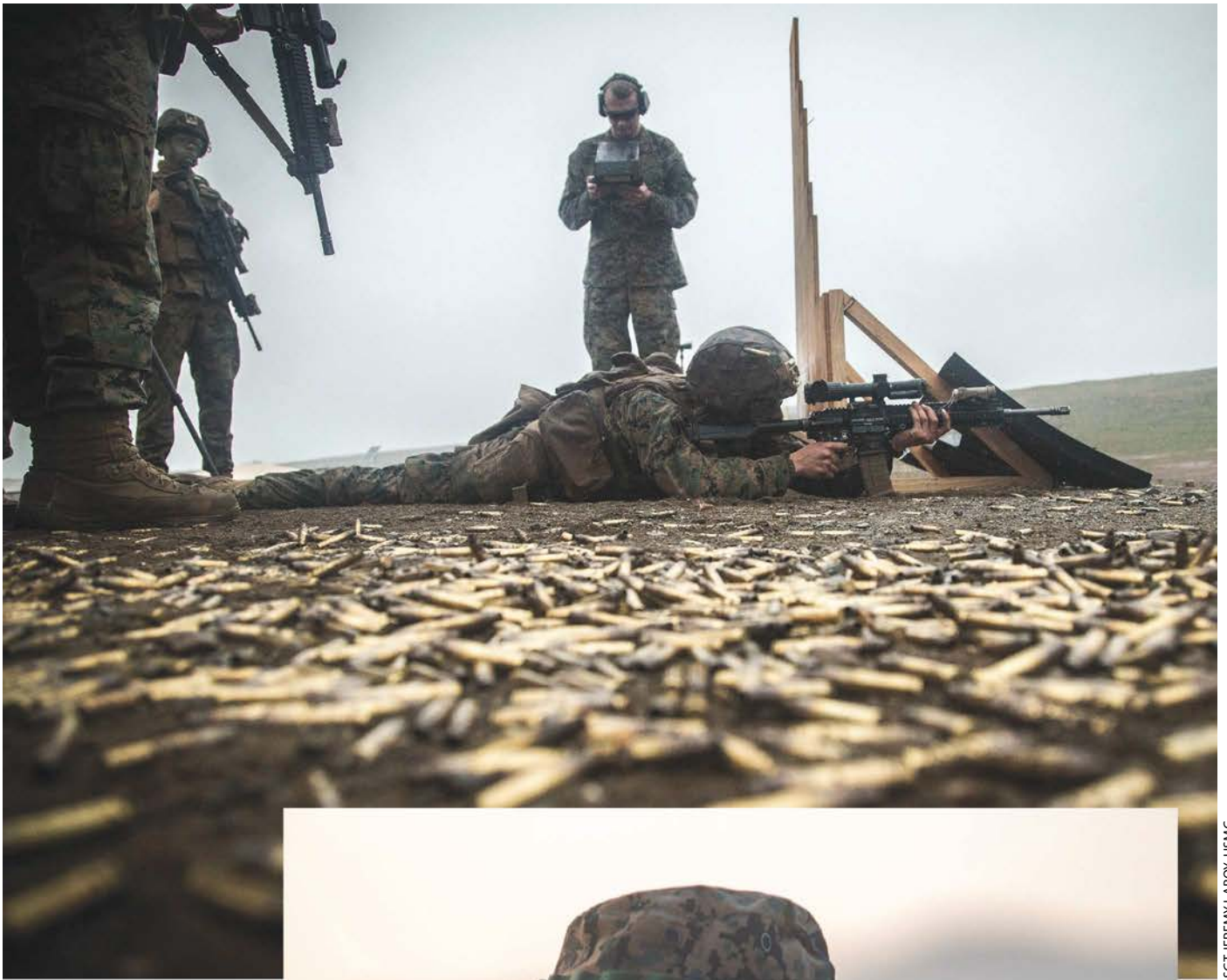


Marines with Alpha Co, ITB, SOI-West aim downrange at Range 210C during the third week of the Infantry Marine Course at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 10. (Photo by LCpl Andrew Cortez, USMC)



Students mark down coordinates during land navigation training, part of the fourth week of the Infantry Marine Course at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 16. The program of instruction for IMC has been in development for more than a year and follows directives from the 2019 Commandant's Planning Guidance and Force Design 2030.

SGT JEREMY LABOY, USMC



SGT JEREMY LABOY, USMC

Above: During the IMC pilot course, PFC Vito Villi engages targets during an unknown distance evaluation at Range 210F, MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 12.

Right: PFC Jacob Pavesi, a student with Alpha Co, ITB, SOI-West, participates in a 10-kilometer hike during the pilot of the new Infantry Marine Course, Feb. 11. The 14-week course is designed to create better trained and more lethal entry-level infantry Marines who are prepared for near-peer conflicts.



LCPL ANDREW CORTEZ, USMC



SSgt Alexander Teegarden, a platoon commander with Alpha Co, ITB, SOI-West, gives a safety brief to students before a fire and movement exercise on Range 215A, MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., March 3. The Marines completed the exercise during the sixth week of the pilot program for the new Infantry Marine Course. (Photo by LCpl Drake Nickels, USMC)

higher level of understanding. Rather than ‘do a thing because I said so,’ it’s ‘get to a fundamental end state, and here are the tools that can help you achieve that goal.’”

The new course uses a student-centered approach to learning, and the extended length provides additional time for practical application and repetitions. The number of combat instructors has also been increased, with one squad instructor leading each 14-man squad through the course. After initial instruction on a certain topic, the Marines will be expected to think for themselves each time that type of situation comes up again. Marines will also be expected to be more responsible for themselves unlike previous iterations of the course with much closer supervision and direction.

“To be more dispersed and more precise, we need privates now that can operate by themselves and don’t have to be told and shown where to go all the time,” explained Koury.

During the first nine weeks of the new

course, the Marines are taught individual skills like weapons manipulation, land navigation and radio communication. The Marines’ M27 infantry automatic rifles will be the “vehicle” for most of those individual skills, but the Marines themselves will be more than just riflemen. By the time they graduate from IMC, they will be proficient with every company-level weapon system, including machine guns and antitank missiles.

“IMC is not a specific skillset for one Marine to be a rifleman, or a machine gunner or anti-tank missile gunner,” said Staff Sergeant Jude Stewart, the lead marksmanship instructor for Alpha Co. “The infantry Marine of the future will be able to do all of them and understand when and where that skill needs to be applied.”

The next segment of the training will focus on testing their new knowledge in a collective environment, forcing the Marines to work together as fire teams and squads. They’ll learn how to patrol over complex terrain and employ fire and

maneuver tactics. This is also when the Marines will learn about combat orders and conduct multiple student-led force-on-force actions.

The lessons learned during the first iteration of the IMC pilot will inform the following three, with each successive course alternating between SOI-West and SOI-East before the program of instruction is finalized next year. This will give both the schools and the Fleet Marine Force the time to evaluate IMC graduates and ensure the new program is creating the infantry Marines the Corps will need in the future.

“Rote memorization, instant obedience to orders are good for certain things, and they’re not getting thrown away from this course,” said Pascuiti. “We’re just going a step further and understanding that the individual—and a collective of individuals—is what wins in combat. What we have to recognize is these young Marines, through a collective of individuals, will win the day for us.” 🇺🇸

History of the 2nd Marine Division

By J.L. Zimmerman

Editor's note: This is the second in a series of historical articles about the Corps' Divisions during World War II. Prepared in 1945 by what was then known as the Historical Division of the Marine Corps, the article traces the activities of 2nd Marine Division from its establishment through all of its battles of the Pacific War.

Years from now, as men who served with the 2nd Marine Division in the Pacific war gather at a veterans' convention or meet at a businessmen's conference, a chance remark will send their memories reeling back to the days when they fought on large and small islands and won their battles by slugging it out.

One gentleman, successful and larger around the waist, recalls the 2nd Regiment. "That was a real outfit! We were the first Americans to land on a Japanese-occupied island when the Pacific offensive started back in '42. That was Florida Island. We went ashore there to cover the landings on Tulagi."

Impatient to mention his unit, another interjects, "You fellows may have been the first into action, but the 8th Regiment was in on the Solomons, too. We were the last Marine unit ordered into action in the war. That was on Okinawa."

Others speak up. Names of islands which years have dimmed in their minds become clear again.

"Guadalcanal was where we started ... rest and training in New Zealand ... then Tarawa ... Saipan and Tinian ... Okinawa. ..."



A Marine throws a grenade during the fight for Betio Island in November 1943.

Wherever veterans of the 2nd Division gather in years to come, they will recall the old days in the Pacific. All will be proud to remember their service for mention of the 2nd Division carries with it the distinction of that organization's record.

The early history of the 2nd Division is peculiar in that it was not until the battle for Tarawa that the organization fought as a unit. When it did function for the first time as a complete division, it was one of the most seasoned in the Pacific. All of its component parts had tasted battle during the lean, hard days of the war.

Six months before the outbreak of war in the Pacific, the 6th Regiment, reinforced by elements of the 10th Marines and the 5th Defense Battalion, started on its first mission. Designated the 1st Marine Provisional Brigade under the command of Major General John Marston, it sailed for Iceland in June 1941. The unit disembarked at Reykjavik on July 11, 1941, and served there as a supplemental unit to the British garrison until March 1942 when it was returned to the United States and its parent organization.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the Division had been charged with the task of defending the California coast from Oceanside to the Mexican border. When the threat of Japanese invasion of the West Coast had passed, the Division returned to Camp Elliott, near San Diego, to train for combat.

It seemed the fate of the Division to operate with its units scattered. Prior to the return of the 6th Regiment and its reinforcing units, another brigade was formed around the 8th Regiment and sent to American Samoa, which was a tempting Pacific plum to the Japanese.

That brigade sailed early in January 1942.

Loss of the 8th Regiment was made up temporarily when the 9th Regiment was activated on Feb. 12 and attached to the Division. Midsummer found another segment of the Division pulled away when the 2nd Regiment, reinforced by one battalion of the 10th Regiment and other elements, sailed for the Pacific to rendezvous with the 1st Marine Division. The American offensive in the Pacific was about to start.

On Aug. 7, 1942, the 2nd Regiment (then attached to the 1st Division) went into action in the Solomons. Newspaper headlines across the United States screamed word of the battle for the Solomons. While the 2nd Regiment fought side by side with units of the 1st Division, the remainder of the 2nd Division trained along the Southern California coast.

Hardened and well-trained in land

tactics and amphibious warfare, the 2nd Division was ordered overseas in the early fall of 1942.

The 6th Marines (reinforced) sailed for New Zealand on Oct. 19, under command of Colonel Gilder T. Jackson, and the remaining units left San Diego on Oct. 21 and Nov. 3.

The first echelon of Division Headquarters, under command of Brigadier General Alphonse De Carree, and the 6th Marines sailed from Wellington, New Zealand, on the day after Christmas 1942 to take part in the final phase of the battle for Guadalcanal. At that time the 2nd Regiment, under Col J.M. Arthur, had been in action for nearly five consecutive months. The 8th Marines, under Col R.H. Jeschke, had been in action for nearly two months. All three regiments of the Division fought on Guadalcanal, and many men were severely infected with tropical diseases.

By March 1, 1943, the entire division had been reassembled in New Zealand. After a short period devoted to recreation and rehabilitation, training for the next operation was started. Target practice, field problems and forced marches over the rugged New Zealand countryside gradually welded the veterans and the newly arrived replacements into a strong, well-integrated combat force.

The men of the Division were given liberty and short leaves of absence during this period. Thousands of 2nd Division Marines made friends with New Zealanders and established a strong bond between the unit and that tiny country. At the request of New Zealand authorities, MajGen Julian C. Smith, the Division commanding general, later supplied a full list of casualties after the Tarawa battle for publication in the country's newspapers. A year later obituary columns of the same newspapers carried "in memoriam" notices, placed there in memory of fallen Marines by their New Zealand friends.

The division sailed from Wellington Harbor in early November 1943. On Nov. 20, MajGen Smith took his Marines ashore at Tarawa Atoll and into the most vicious fight of the war to that time.

The first units to land were the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 2nd Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the 8th Regiment. They stormed ashore on the north side of Betio Island with little difficulty.

The next units to land, the 1st Battalion of the 2nd Regiment and the 3rd Battalion of the 8th Regiment, were met by heavy fire from the bitterly resisting enemy and suffered heavy casualties. Japanese fire was so heavy that later waves of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Regiment, were forced to withdraw to the protection of a concrete pier. By the end of D-day the 2nd and 8th



MajGen John Marston



BGen Alphonse De Carree



MajGen Julian C. Smith

Regiment held precariously to a shallow beachhead. At that point the remaining regiment of the Division, the 6th, was released to division control and taken into action by Col Maurice G. Holmes.

On the second day, the 1st Battalion of the 8th Marines came ashore. It was hit hard on a reef which made passage of boats impossible. Men waded 700 yards to the shore under constant fire of machine guns and snipers. The battle ended Nov. 24, and American and British flags were raised on Tarawa. The 2nd and 8th Regiments shipped for Pearl Harbor, leaving the 6th Regiment to mop up on various small islands of the group.

On Dec. 4, the last elements of the Division left the Gilbert Islands and were shipped to Hawaii. The small rear echelon, which had been left in Wellington, rejoined the division there.

The battle for Tarawa had been a costly one. In the few days of combat, the Division had lost 783 men killed, 2,091 wounded, and 206 missing. So confused had been the action, that many men listed

as missing were found later in widely scattered ports, where they had been taken when evacuated as casualties.

Although it was not known at the time, the Division in effect took part in a great experiment at Tarawa. For the first time in the Pacific war, a direct frontal assault had been delivered against a heavily fortified small island whose defenses were manned by a determined and efficient enemy. For the first time also, naval gunfire and aerial bombardment had been used for the reduction of those defenses.

Immediately upon its arrival in Hawaii, the Division embarked on a strenuous program of training. The reorganization of some units took place, and new and highly specialized units were added for specific duties. The rocket and improved flame-thrower made their appearance.

By the middle of March 1944, training had continually progressed and landing exercises were planned and carried out. The 8th Regiment, under Col Elmer E. Hall, conducted a mock assault on the island of Maui against opposition

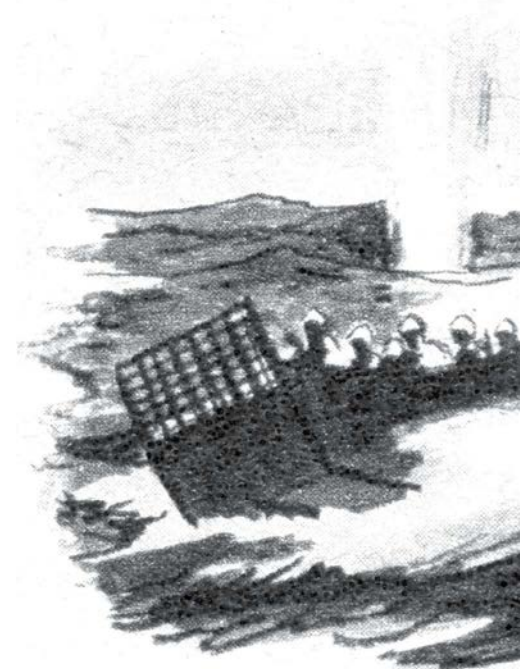
furnished by the Division Reconnaissance Company. By the time Gen Smith was detached on April 10, the Division had grown in size and was a well-integrated unit. Under the new commander, BGen Thomas E. Watson, the tempo of training was maintained, and it became obvious that a new operation was in prospect. Early in May, details of the Marianas Islands were given to the Division for study with particular emphasis to be placed on the Saipan-Tinian area. A detailed rehearsal of the projected assault was held on the island of Maui near the end of the month, and upon completion the Division moved to Pearl Harbor for rest, liberty, and rehabilitation.

Two serious mishaps occurred during the month of May, each of which involved landing craft and each caused loss of life and material damage. At the beginning of the rehearsal an LCT was lost overboard from her parent ship. Two men were killed outright, 15 others were missing and presumed dead, and 12 men were injured. Less than a week later two LSTs were destroyed by fire in Pearl Harbor. In this mishap two men were killed, 27 were missing, and 56 injured.

The Division was now ready for an operation of an entirely different character from those in which it had participated earlier. The assault on the Marianas was to be a blow toward the interior of the Japanese defenses. It was also an operation which would involve the employment of a large number of men on a land mass sufficiently large to allow considerable maneuvering of troops. It was to be a test



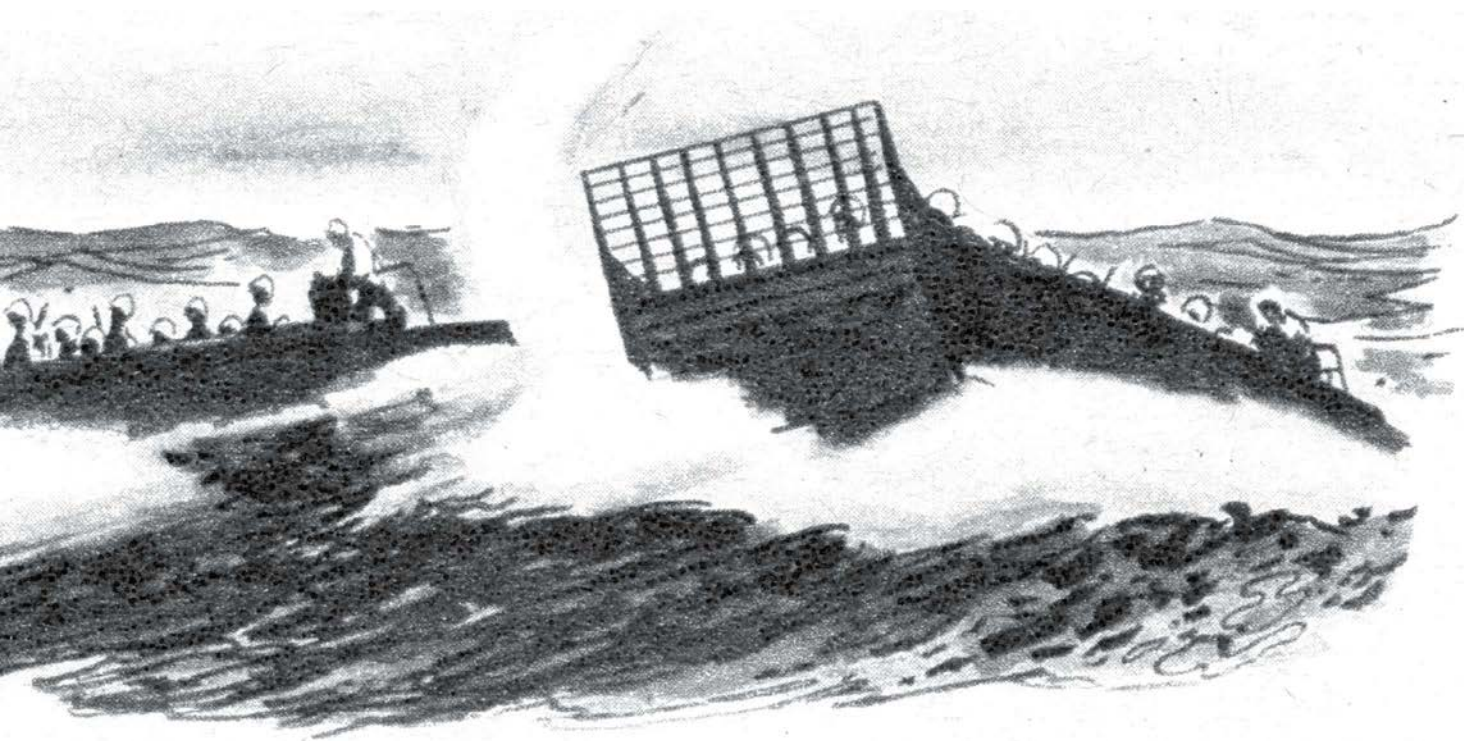
An aerial photo of the south side of Tarawa Atoll taken by Navy Squadron VC-24 on Sept. 9, 1943, from an altitude of 12,000 feet. Betio Island is in the foreground with Bairiki and Eita Islands beyond.





USMC

Leathernecks of the 2nd Marine Division work to get off the beach during the assault on Saipan in July 1944.



of American tactical doctrine against enemy doctrine under conditions which would permit movement of troops.

Saipan was the object of the first assault by the 2ndMarDiv in the Marianas campaign; the landing was on a stretch of beach on the western coast of the island, south of the town of Garapan. During this operation, the Division was a part of the 5th Amphibious Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith. Its companion units were the 4th Division, under MajGen Harry Schmidt, and the 27th Army Division under MG Ralph Smith, USA.

The 2nd and 4th Divisions landed abreast on D-day. The 2nd was to cut off the northwestern part of the island and establish a beachhead line. The 4th had the task of taking and securing Aslito airfield, key to the island's defenses, while the 27th Army Division, landed on D+2, was to swing into the middle of the drive between the 2nd and 4th Divisions.

Initial objective of the 2nd was the seizing of the crestline of a chain of hills which paralleled the coast on the far side of a plain, and the scheme of operations was for one regiment, the 8th, to drive directly across the island. Once this objective was reached, the left flank reg-



MajGen Harry Schmidt

iment, the 6th, was to swing gradually to the north toward Mount Tapotchau. The 8th Marines, having reached the east coast, were likewise to swing to the northward and establish the Landing Force Beachhead Line which was scheduled to extend from the islands east coast to the west coast.

The landing was made as planned and in the initial phases everything went well.

Ferocity of the fighting increased steadily, and the Division soon found that it was opposed by an able and tough enemy. The 8th Regiment suffered heavy casualties in its 2nd Battalion. Progress was steady, however, and while there were momentary setbacks, the issue was never seriously in doubt.

The fighting on Saipan was only a part of the task of the 2nd Division. The smaller island of Tinian, a few miles southwest of the main island, had to be reduced. For this operation, the 4th Division was assigned the initial assault while the 2nd Division was to land subsequently on the same beach. On July 21, the 2nd and the 8th Regiments embarked for the short trip to the new objective.

While the assault was being made by the 4th Division, the 2nd Division created a diversion off Tinian Town some distance from the actual landing beaches. Upon completion of that duty, the Division returned to the transport area off the landing beaches, and the 1st Battalion, 8th, went ashore.

On July 26, the entire Division, less the 6th Marines, was ashore and word was received that the remaining regiment was on its way from Saipan. Once more the first phases of the action were carried



Marines with 2ndMarDiv use a captured Japanese tank on Saipan in 1944. Saipan was the site of the first major engagement for the Division after the battle for Tarawa in late 1943.

out against light opposition, but enemy resistance constantly increased.

On July 31, a line of vertical cliffs where the enemy had decided to make a decisive stand was reached. The attack was driven through, the advance continued, and just after nightfall on Aug. 11, the commanding general announced that organized resistance had ceased.

The troops began returning to Saipan a few days later, and by Aug. 13, only the 8th Regiment remained on Tinian.

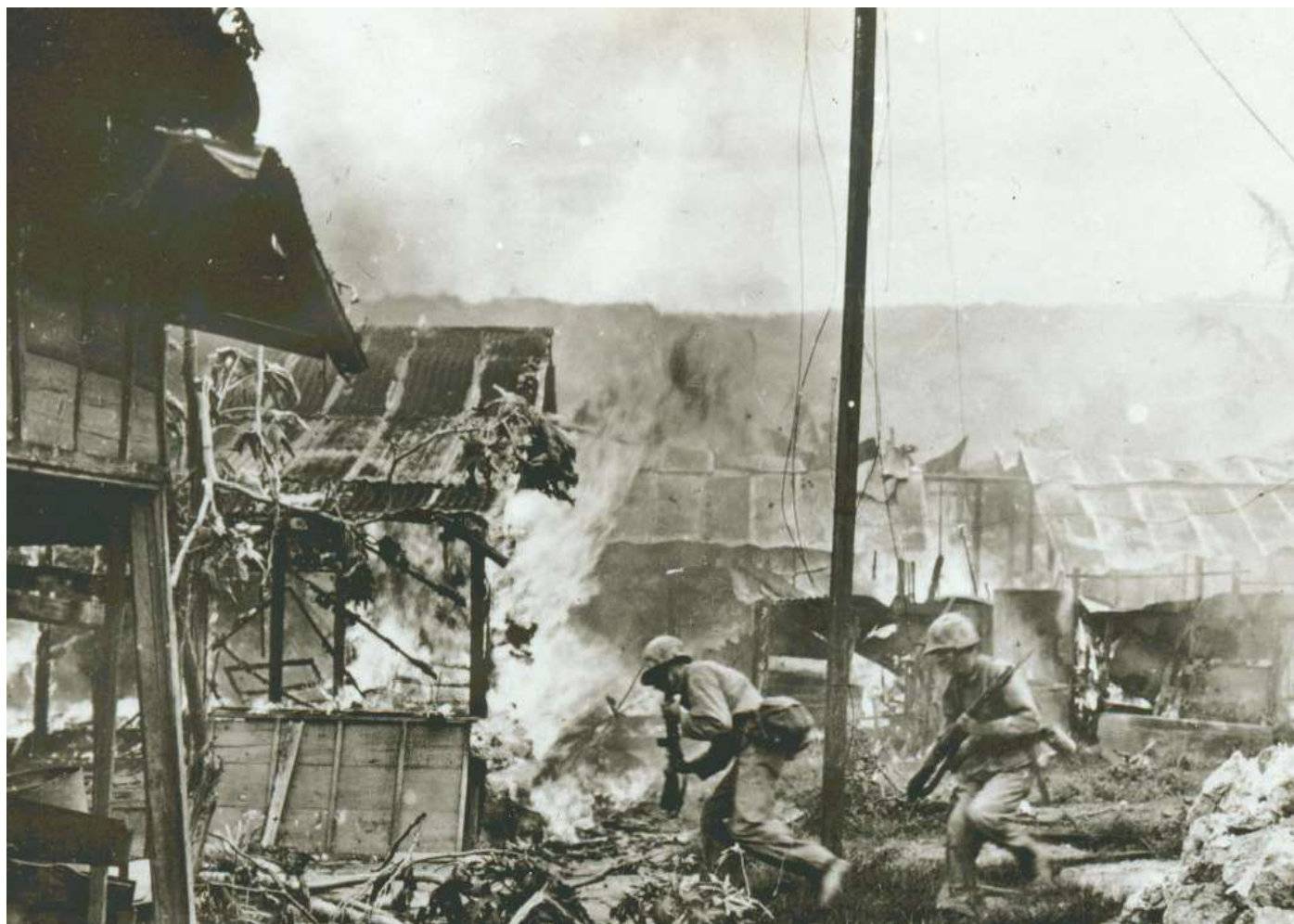
Then began a long period of mopping up on Saipan. Enemy soldiers were killed daily, and casualties were incurred daily. On Oct. 20, the Division passed from the control of the 5th Amphibious Corps and became a part of the 3rd Amphibious Corps, the latter at the time being a part of the newly formed 10 Army.

On Nov. 15, it was decided that the use of patrols for cleaning out pockets of enemy resistance was unsuccessful, and the entire division was used to clean up Saipan—an island where organized resistance had ceased several months before. During this operation, which lasted three days, 255 Japanese were killed, and 47 captured. The Division lost nine men killed and 40 wounded.



Above: Marines stand in a foxhole near the front lines on Saipan, July 1, 1944. Elements of 2ndMarDiv later went ashore on nearby Tinian to capture that island also. (USN photo)

Below: The intense fight for the island of Saipan was crucial to the American efforts in the island hopping campaign. Gen Holland M. Smith said that Saipan was “the decisive battle in the Pacific offensive ...”





USMC

Marines from the 2nd and 8th Regiments ashore on Tinian in late July 1944.

Late in December an island command order relieved the Division of further responsibility for mopping up, and a program of training immediately began in preparation for the next operation.

Replacements began to flow in and the Division strength grew. It was clear that the new operation was to be a large one since, for the first time, the Marines were to act as part of a complete field army. New units appeared in the 2nd Division line-up and April 1, 1945, found the Division a part of the task group engaging in diversionary activities along the southeast coast of Okinawa. On the same day the balance of the 10th Army was going ashore on the opposite side of the island and somewhat to the north. On April 2, the diversionary maneuver was repeated and the Division remained as floating reserve.

The landing had been made with unexpected ease by Army and Marine Corps

units. Well-constructed defensive systems were found to be practically without personnel and in the first phases of the operation both the Marines and Army troops met with practically no resistance. It was unnecessary for the 2nd Division to land, and after 10 days of waiting aboard ship, it returned to Saipan and went into rest billets.

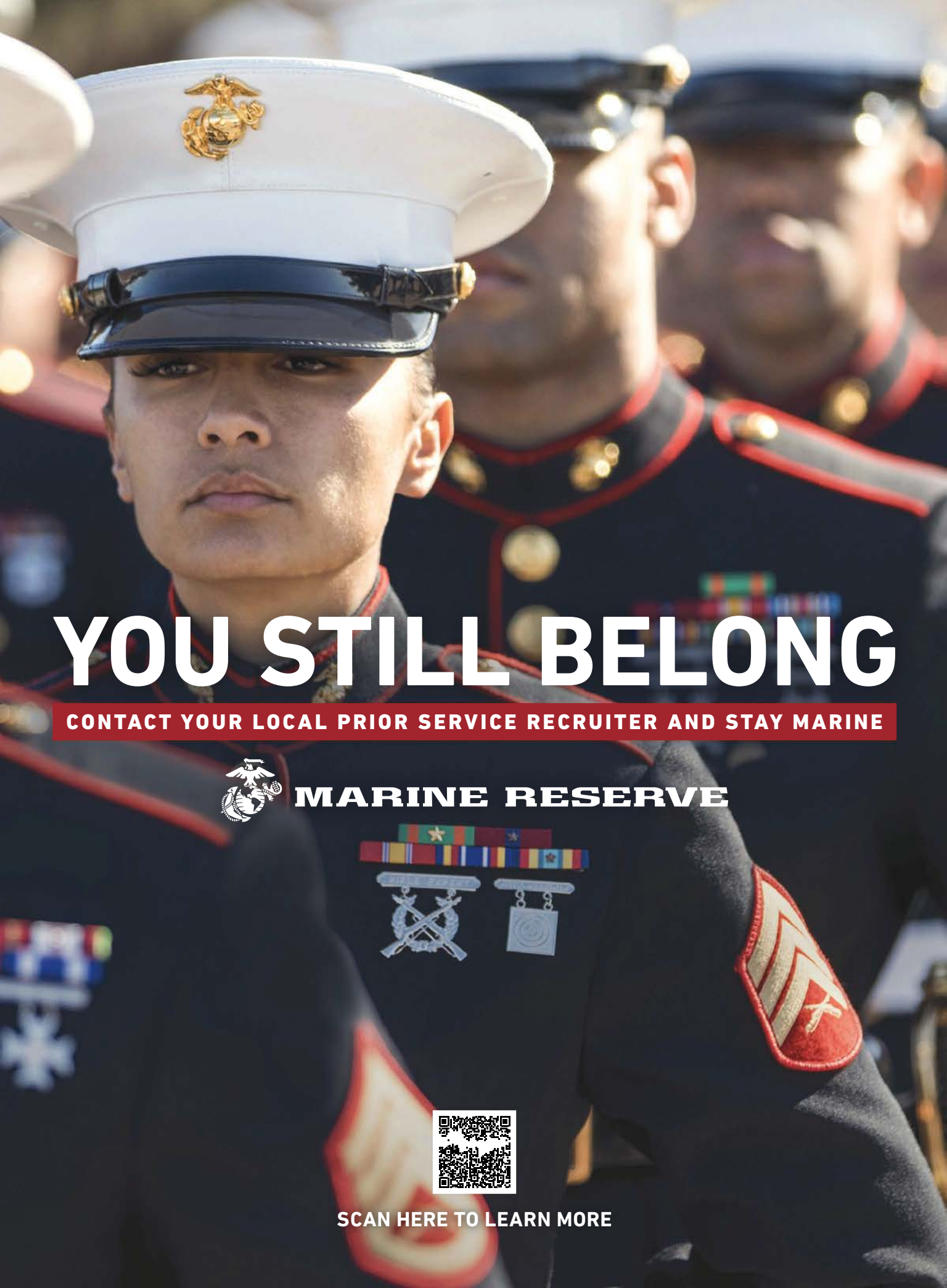
About the middle of May, orders were received by the Division to form a small task group around the 8th Marine Regiment. It had become necessary to seize and occupy two small islands to the north of Okinawa, Iheya and Aguni, and it was to be the function of the task organization to carry out that small operation.

By May 24, all personnel, materiel and equipment were loaded aboard 26 LSTs. After a short halt at Okinawa to take on some engineers and amphibious tractors, the convoy resumed its journey. At 7 a.m.

on June 3, the target area was reached. The beach areas were subjected to three and one-half hours of naval gunfire. Troops and supplies were put ashore and found no resistance whatever to the landing.

Notwithstanding a total lack of enemy, two men were killed and 16 wounded by short rounds of naval gunfire and rockets. At noon on June 4, Iheya was officially secured. Aguni fell at the same time and the mission of the task organization was complete.

A new task awaited the unit during the last days of the Okinawa campaign. The 8th Regiment (reinforced) went into action on the eastern flank of the lines on southern Okinawa. It participated in the final drive toward the southern end of the island and brought to the 2nd Division a unique honor, that of having supplied the first and the last Marine Corps units to be sent into action in the Pacific war. 🇺🇸



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ELIZABETH FRASER

A Marine presents a folded flag from the casket of Col Jaime Sabater to his son, Jared Sabater, in Section 55 of Arlington National Cemetery, Nov. 6, 2019.

15 Things the Marine Corps’ Funeral Honors Section Wants Veterans and Retirees to Know

By Sara W. Bock

Once earned, the title “Marine” becomes deeply ingrained in a person’s identity even decades after putting away the uniform. And for many, it’s of the utmost importance that upon their death, the Marines are there to take care of their own by rendering honors on behalf of a grateful nation.

Whether they served for two years or 40; were a private first class or the Commandant; are being buried at Arlington National Cemetery or in a small town in middle America, all veteran and retired Marines who

received an honorable or general discharge are entitled to receive funeral honors performed by the Marine Corps if requested by their surviving family members. At a minimum, the presence of two uniformed Marines, the folding and presentation of the American flag and the sounding of “Taps” are required by law and are considered a “sacred duty, honor and privilege” for the Marine Corps, according to Gunnery Sergeant Jason Attema, staff noncommissioned officer in charge of funeral honors, a section of Headquarters

Marine Corps Casualty Assistance which oversees all requests for Marine Corps funeral honors for veteran and retired Marines interred outside the confines of Arlington National Cemetery.

“We keep up with the tradition of honor, courage and commitment,” said Attema. “These men and women had the courage and commitment to fight for our country, and we have the honor of being able to provide these honors for them and honor the servicemember and their families for their sacrifice and for their service, and we will always do that, past and present. It’s our final demonstration to the family of how grateful of a nation we are, that their loved one served in the Marine Corps.”

It’s not always a comfortable topic, but *Leatherneck* regularly fields questions from our veteran readers or their surviving family members regarding funeral honors, so we reached out to the HQMC funeral honors section to help demystify the process of requesting honors, explain what honors veteran and retired Marines rate, and clear up some common misconceptions. Based on an interview with GySgt Attema, we came up with the following list of 15 things veterans and retirees should know about funeral honors:

1. Six Marines are assigned to the HQMC funeral honors section and are responsible for fielding all requests for honors across the nation, processing them and “tasking them out” to the nearest unit. According to Attema, HQMC has a funeral honors database that lists every Marine Corps installation and unit nationwide including reserve units, schoolhouses and Marine Corps detachments all the way from Alaska to Puerto Rico. Units that are geographically closest to the funeral service or burial receive a “tasker” email which includes the pertinent information about the service and the unit must verify receipt of the tasker by close of business that same day. Once the request is received, the local unit assigns Marines to serve on the funeral detail.

2. In 1999, Congress passed a law requiring the military services to provide funeral honors for eligible veterans. But, according to Attema, the Marine Corps was already doing so. “We have always found that duty to be sacred. We were doing that prior to it becoming mandatory, so [the legislation] didn’t really affect us as much,” he said. Since

Right: Cpl Kyle Menz, a bugler with “The Commandant’s Own” United States Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, plays “Taps” during the funeral of Sgt Julian Kevianne at Arlington National Cemetery, Aug. 3, 2017.



CPL ROBERT KNAPP, USM



A Marine prepares to present a folded flag to the father of SSgt Benjamin Hines at Arlington National Cemetery, May 10, 2019. (Photo by Elizabeth Fraser)

being assigned to his current billet in 2017, Attema has coordinated funeral honors for two Marines who died during the Vietnam War era and did not receive honors at the time due to lack of available personnel stateside. In one of the instances, they coordinated a detail of Marines from the nearest unit, traveled to where the Marine was interred and presented the flag to the Marine’s granddaughter, who was his closest living relative at that point. “If we find that there was one that wasn’t done, and there’s an inkling of proof or doubt that it wasn’t done, we’ll task a unit to go do it,” he added.

3. Every Marine rates the same honors. It’s a common misconception, Attema said, that the term “full military honors” means more than the standard two uniformed servicemembers, the folding and presentation of the flag and the sounding of “Taps.” But according to the Department of Defense order, these are full honors and all Marines are entitled to them regardless of rank or retired status. Families of veteran and retired Marines can request rifle details, pallbearers or military chaplains, but the Marine Corps is unable to guarantee that these requests will be fulfilled due to manpower and unit availability. “If the unit has it, they’ll do whatever they can to support it,” Attema emphasized. The funeral honors section occasionally receives requests for aircraft flyovers, but the Department of the Navy has very strict requirements for who can qualify for those: active-duty pilots or servicemembers who died in an aviation mishap, valor award recipients, or dignitaries of the Armed Forces and federal government.



SGT EDRAS RUANO, USMC

4. Whenever possible, the Marine Corps sends more than the minimum two uniformed servicemembers. “We send as many as we can,” said Attema. It all comes down to the size and capability of the unit that is assigned to provide honors. A rifle detail requires between three and seven Marines and a commander of troops, in addition to the two who fold and present the flag. “Some units only have four or five Marines, so there’s no way they can do the rifle detail,” Attema said. Sometimes, a unit has multiple funeral services to attend in a day, which further limits the number of Marines they are able to provide.

5. The majority of requests for honors—nine out of 10 times—come from funeral directors. “That’s part of the funeral home’s job,” said Attema. “The family shouldn’t have to do anything.” However, next-of-kin family members are welcome to contact HQMC directly to request honors. The requesting party can

Marines from Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, S.C., serve as the honor guard during the burial of SSgt LaSalle Vaughn Jr., one of the original Montford Point Marines, at the Beaufort National Cemetery, Sept. 26, 2012.

expect, on average, three to four phone calls—once when the request is received by HQMC to acknowledge receipt as well as ask for additional documentation, including the social security number and military discharge paperwork of the deceased; again by the unit when the request is received by the unit; and at least once more prior to the service to verify that the details haven’t changed.

6. It is against the law for a funeral home to charge families for requesting military honors. Attema said that occasionally he is made aware that a funeral home has added a charge—often hundreds of dollars—to a funeral bill for requesting military honors. This is not legal, he said, and should be reported. “It is a free service,” he emphasized.

7. The process of requesting Marine Corps funeral honors can easily be done online. At <https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Agencies/Casualty-MFPC/Funeral-Honors/>, under “How to Request Honors,” there are two options: an online request form and a fill and print form which can be scanned and emailed or faxed. The funeral honors section can also be reached at funeral.honors@usmc.mil or by phone at (866) 826-3628. The online submission form provides HQMC with everything they need to know to begin processing the request. The requester will receive a confirmation email that their request has been received, but should expect, on average, to allow 48 to 72 hours for processing. “If you haven’t heard back, call us,” said Attema. “We don’t want to have any missed services.”

Below: The color guard from Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., prepares to march during a funeral procession at Arlington National Cemetery, June 8, 2017.



CPL ROBERT KNAPP, USMC



CPL ROBERT KNAPP, USMC

8. HQMC receives next-day funeral support requests on a daily basis. While they ask that all requests are submitted at least a week prior to the ceremony, it doesn't always happen that way for various reasons. Attema and his team strive to make sure that all requests are fulfilled whenever possible. Requests aren't typically handled on a first-come, first-served basis for that reason, but are sorted and assigned based on the date of the service. "If someone calls and says their husband's going to be buried at Riverside National in three months, we may not get to that one as quickly as the one that's in two days," said Attema. "It's all dependent on the date the actual service is going to occur."

9. Even if you don't have or can't find the required military discharge paperwork, you can still request funeral honors. Anyone requesting funeral honors on behalf of a deceased veteran is required to furnish a DD-214 or a NAVMAC 78PD if the veteran was discharged prior to Jan. 1, 1950. But if you can't find it, don't panic. Contact the Marine Corps anyway. Attema and his Marines understand that sometimes these get misplaced or lost and can work with the National Personnel Records Center to have requests for discharge papers fulfilled in as few as 1 to 3 days—a process that generally takes six months to a year. A letter of good standing from the Department of Veterans Affairs may also suffice.

10. The funeral honors section verifies honorable service prior to approving honors. Not all who served in the Marine Corps are eligible to receive funeral honors. "You can have a discharge characterization of honorable through general," said Attema. "If it's bad conduct, other-than-honorable or dishonorable, we are unable to render honors." Attema also added that if an individual "tarnishes" his or her honorable service after they are discharged, such as by committing a state or federal capital crime, the Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) can

Marines from Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., lower a casket during a funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, June 8, 2017.

elect to deny honors. If the death occurred under nefarious circumstances—a police shootout, for instance—Attema contacts the local authorities where the incident happened to collect information and compiles a denial package that is then sent up to the Deputy Commandant. “If rendering honors would tarnish the reputation of the Marine Corps, then DC, M&RA can decide to withhold rendering of honors for that veteran or retiree even,” Attema said.

11. The motto of Marine Corps Casualty Assistance is “taking care of our own,” and extends far beyond providing funeral honors. Funeral honors is just one of the numerous sections that comprise the multifaceted Casualty Assistance Program. “If you served, if you put on our uniform and fought to the left and right of us, we will always be there to take care of you and take care of your family, no matter what,” said Attema. Within casualty assistance, the operations section notifies next of kin of wounded, ill and injured active-duty Marines by



SGT MACKENZIE GIBSON, USMC

Marines with the Quantico Ceremonial Platoon fire a rifle volley during a funeral at Quantico National Cemetery in Triangle, Va., Oct. 8, 2019.



Left: LCpl Shawn DeLeon, a member of the Quantico Ceremonial Platoon, folds a flag during a funeral at Quantico National Cemetery in Triangle, Va., Oct. 8, 2019. (Photo by Sgt Mackenzie Gibson, USMC)

Below: Marines fold the flag during a funeral ceremony for LtGen Martin L. Brandtner, USMC (Ret), at the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Fernley, Nev., Jan. 19, 2017.



LCPL DANNY GONZALEZ, USMC

active-duty servicemembers even decades after their death. The repatriation (POW/MIA) program ensures that recovered and identified remains of Marines from past conflicts are escorted by a uniformed Marine to their final resting place. Three Navy morticians work in the Marine Corps casualty assistance program as well, assisting with the transportation, storage of remains and burial fees for Marines who have died on active duty.

12. All commanders are responsible for ensuring that their Marines are properly trained and conduct training periodically on funeral honors to keep up that “muscle memory.” Marine Corps Order 3040.4 outlines requirements for funeral honors, how to properly fold the burial flag and what is required, said Attema. “You have to know what to do at all times because you never know when you’re going to get a funeral honors tasker,” he said. “This is the last thing that that family’s going to see of their loved one, so you want to make it as perfect as you

13. A rifle detail performs a “rifle volley,” not a 21-gun salute. This is a common misconception, said Attema, and one that he has to clear up for people quite frequently. “It’s three to seven Marines that come up and fire three shots simultaneously,” he said of the rifle volley, adding that gun salutes are fired by cannon, not rifles, and are rare—an honor reserved only for high-ranking dignitaries and officials.

14. COVID-19 restrictions have presented some challenges for rendering funeral honors, but the Marine Corps has and will continue to rise to the occasion. It’s been largely dependent on location, but Attema said that for a period of time in 2020, most national cemeteries were shut down and uniformed personnel were not permitted on their grounds to render honors. Since then, restrictions have eased, but many still place a limit on the number of individuals who can attend a service, which in turn limits the number of Marines who can provide honors. The units provide as many Marines as they can without violating the national cemetery statutes and restrictions, he said. “They are still required to wear masks, maintain social distancing, so we’ve had to kind of alter the presentation of the flag a little bit,” he said. In some instances, the Marine presenting the flag will place it on a podium and the next of kin will then walk up and retrieve the flag.

15. The Marine Corps remains ready and prepared to handle any and all requests for funeral honors that come in from locations across the country. The number of services requested continues to rise each year as veterans from the Korean War and Vietnam War eras begin to pass away in greater numbers. In 2020, the Marine Corps coordinated and completed funeral honors for nearly 22,000 veterans and retirees. Attema insists that they are up to the task: “If we receive a funeral honors request, one thing’s for sure, and that’s that the Marines will always be there. We will do everything in our power to make sure that our fallen Marines are honored, and their families know that we understand, recognize and are appreciative of their loved ones and their sacrifice for our country.”

phone and coordinates casualty assistance calls officer (CACO) assignments for in person notifications and provides support for the next of kin of Marines who die while serving on active duty. The administrative section, in turn, handles the logistics of arranging and funding family members’ travel to the bedside of the wounded, ill and injured. There’s also a long-term assistance program, which provides support for survivors of fallen

can.” Many bases and installations have a quarterly rotation for funeral honors duty; at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., there is a dedicated ceremonial platoon that handles all burials at Quantico National Cemetery. In reserve units, the inspector & instructor staff generally are tasked with providing honors, but even Marines in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) can be asked to assist units that are lacking in manpower.

We—the Marines

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

Marine Captain Awarded Purple Heart for Actions In Fallujah, 16 Years Later

On Feb. 24, Captain Kevin W. Leishman received the Purple Heart at Camp Courtney, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, for wounds he sustained in Iraq 16 years earlier.

The scene looked something like this: A cloud of dust filled the air as ground forces engaged the enemy in Fallujah, Iraq. Enemy small-arms fire created flashes of light. As bullets flew in from all directions, then-Staff Sergeant Leishman laid on top of an amphibious assault vehicle with his M240 machine gun, returning fire to the

enemy that surrounded him and his team.

It was Nov. 10, 2004—the Marine Corps’ birthday—and Leishman was serving as an AAV mechanic with Battalion Landing Team 1st Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, assigned to the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit. Leishman and his Marines were fighting in the historic Second Battle of Fallujah, Operation Phantom Fury.

As bullets whizzed by him, a round entered and lodged in Leishman’s right forearm, embedding itself into his muscle tissue.

“I didn’t know what it was right away,” said Leishman. “When you’re shooting a machine gun, you have hot brass going

Capt Kevin W. Leishman, pictured in the right photo, was awarded the Purple Heart at Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan, Feb. 24, for injuries he sustained during the Second Battle of Fallujah in 2004. BGen Kyle Ellison, CG, 3rd MEB, pictured on the left in the below photo, was instrumental in helping Leishman receive the long-overdue award and presented it to him during a ceremony with his wife and children in attendance.



CPL FRANCESCA LANDIS, USMC



CPL FRANCESCA LANDIS, USMC

everywhere, and sometimes you get hot brass down your blouse.”

Leishman continued on with his mission like nothing had happened. People get tunnel vision during combat, he explained. Training kicks in and creates an intense focus on the mission at hand. It wasn't until a couple hours later that Leishman realized he had been shot. He applied dressings to his wound to stop the bleeding after returning back to camp.

Leishman said his platoon suffered many casualties from rocket-propelled grenades and small arms fire from the enemy. Fierce urban combat dominated the battle space.

The Second Battle of Fallujah is this generation's version of the Battle of Hue City, said Brigadier General Kyle Ellison, the commanding general of 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

Because Leishman's unit hastily attached to the 11th MEU for Operation Phantom Fury, his medical documents, along with those of other Marines in his unit, were not transferred to the MEU medical staff. Though Leishman's wound sustained during battle was documented in Iraq, it was never brought to light when he returned to his original command.

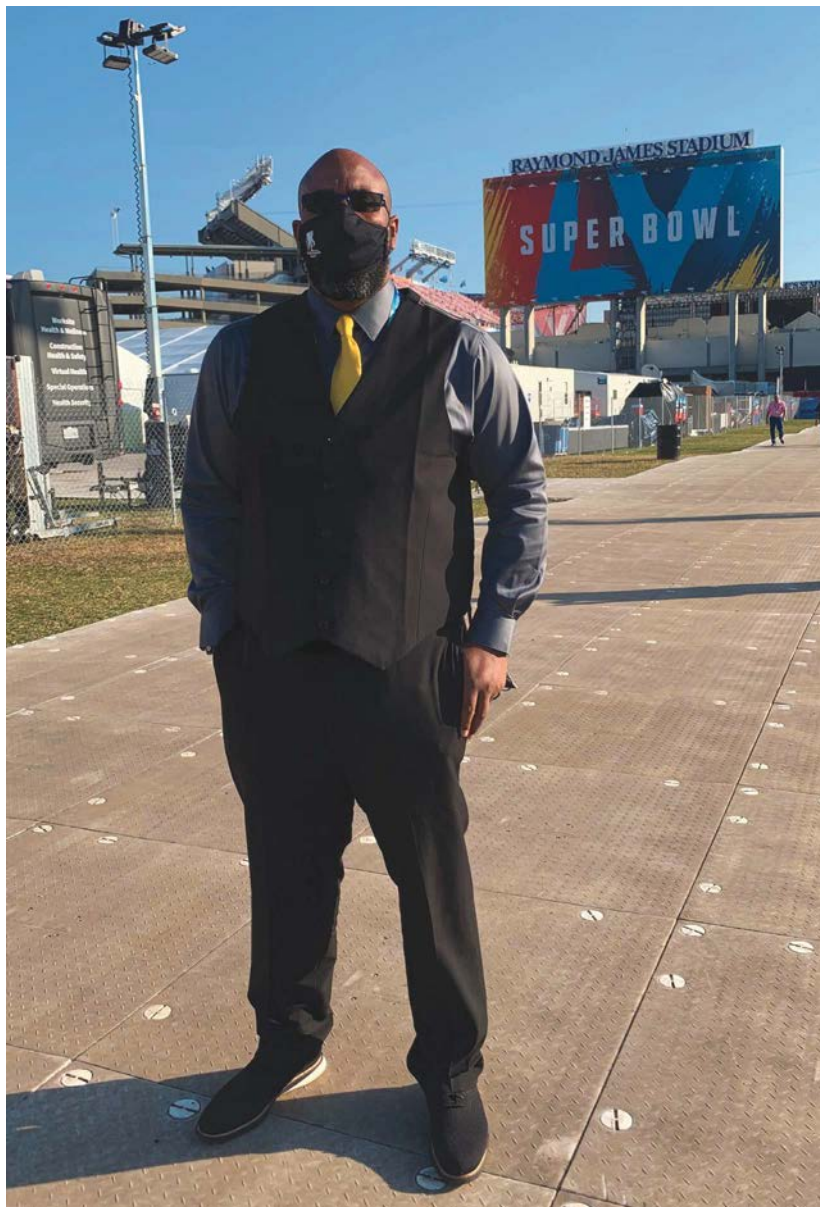
Now a captain, Leishman is stationed on Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan, where he is assigned to 3rd Marine Expeditionary Brigade. After learning that Leishman should have been awarded for his wound, BGen Ellison started the process that would enable the Marine to receive the long overdue Purple Heart.

To complete the required paperwork, at least one eyewitness needed to give a statement. To Leishman's surprise, his old platoon commander from BLT 1/4 is also currently stationed in Okinawa. With this last piece of the “puzzle,” Leishman's Purple Heart was approved by the Awards Branch at Headquarters Marine Corps.

“It takes special men and women to do the kinds of things Marines do,” said BGen Ellison to Leishman during the award presentation. “As you wear that award, wear it with pride. Not for yourself, but for everybody else, for the countless men and women who have sacrificed their lives for our nation and for the ones who will do so in the future—because our business is not done.”

Cpl Francesca Landis, USMC

Editor's note: To learn more about how the Marine Corps processes and approves awards years after they were earned, access the May 2019 issue in the Leatherneck archives and read “Awards Branch: MMA Works to Ensure Accuracy, Recognition for Deserving Marines.”



CHORUS OF THE CAPTAINS—Marine veteran James Martin, who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and was injured in combat in 2013, was named one of three honorary captains at Super Bowl LV in Tampa, Fla., Feb. 7. In a nod to Martin and the other honorary captains—educator Trimaine Davis and nurse Suzie Dorner—Amanda Gorman, the National Youth Poet Laureate, recited “Chorus of the Captains” in a pre-recorded video that aired during the Super Bowl. Her original poem featured the three exemplary Americans, all of whom have demonstrated a commitment to helping others throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

“James has felt the wounds of warfare, but this warrior still shares his home with at-risk kids,” recited Gorman. Martin, who lives in Pittsburgh, Pa., works with Veterans Breakfast Club, a nonprofit dedicated to creating “communities of listening” around veterans and their stories, and he is co-host of the organization's podcast, “The Scuttlebutt.” During the pandemic, he has worked to connect veterans and their families through the Wounded Warrior Project's virtual programs and has opened his home to children in need and provided them with comfort and guidance, according to Matalée Reed of Bolt PR.

“We celebrate them by acting with courage and compassion. By doing what is right and just,” Gorman said of the honorary captains in her poem. “For while we honor them today, it is they who every day honor us.”



A Marine with Weapons Training Bn conducts the new ARQ during a “train the trainer” course at MCB Quantico, Va., Feb. 17. The ARQ is replacing the current annual rifle training by creating a more operationally realistic training environment and will be implemented service-wide by Fiscal Year 2022. (Photo by PO2 Rachael A. Treon, USN)

New Annual Rifle Qual “Aims” To Make Marines More Lethal

The Marine Corps began the “train the trainer” course for its new annual rifle qualification in February, which will fully replace the previous Table 1 and Table 2 qualification course of fire on Oct. 1.

The Annual Rifle Qualification (ARQ) was designed to give a more realistic and “train like you fight” environment by emphasizing lethality and positional shooting. Improvements to the Marine Corps rifle training and qualification program have been under development since 2016.

The ARQ will further develop combat scenario shooting skills, resulting in a more proficient fighting force. The service-wide entry level rifle training will remain unaffected for recruits at both Marine Corps Recruit Depots and for officers at The Basic School in order to

develop strong fundamentals, confidence and weapon comfortability.

“This has been the same qualification that every Marine shoots throughout their entire career, until now. The ARQ enhances proficiency, confidence and lethality in a dynamic environment using multiple targets, limited exposure targets, moving targets and shooting on the move,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Anthony L. Viggiani, Marine Gunner, Training and Education Command.

Marine Corps-wide implementation will take place no later than the beginning of fiscal year 2022, with active-duty forces transitioning by Oct. 1. During the second and third quarters of fiscal year 2021, Weapons Training Battalion at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., will provide training and assistance on the conduct of ARQ to formal marksmanship training

units in order to facilitate the transition to service-wide ARQ implementation.

The ARQ includes a three-day course of fire. Day one is a “holds day” with the drill portion conducted first. Days two and three are pre-qualification and qualification, respectively, where the “destroy” portion is conducted first with engagements starting far to near in order to foster an offensive combat mindset.

The more operational training requires Marines to conduct the course of fire in helmet and body armor but allows the opportunity to use bipods, rest the weapon on their magazine, or rest the weapon on their assault pack as long as time constraints are met. Scoring is measured by lethal effects with destroying targets in the allotted time.

“This enables the individual Marine the opportunity to engage their weapon

Right: In the prone position, a Marine with Weapons Training Bn shoots according to the new ARQ guidelines during the “train the trainer” course at MCB Quantico, Va., Feb. 17.

system from multiple firing positions and find the most efficient way to utilize alternate shooting positions throughout the course of fire,” said Viggiani. “Our operating environment has changed over the years, so we had to make changes to our qualifications on marksmanship.”

Other significant updates include the incorporation of a singular target throughout the course of fire, with the exception of a moving target at the 100-yard line, with a requirement to score by hitting “lethality zones” and the introduction of support barricades at 100 and 200 yards, allowing Marines to shoot from the standing, kneeling or supported position with stationary and moving targets. This transition from a competition-style course of fire to assessing lethal effects on a target is a significant change for the ARQ.

Similar to the physical fitness and combat fitness tests, Marines must achieve a



PO2 RACHAEL A. TREON, USN

minimum standard in each portion of the course of fire to qualify in the overall assessment. The implementation of the ARQ directly impacts the mission statement: We must adapt our training in a manner consistent with the threat and

anticipated operational challenges as stated in the Commandant’s Planning Guidance.

PO2 Rachael A. Treon, USN



Crazy Caption Contest

Winner



CPL BRITANY ROWLETT, USMC

“I think we missed high tide!”

Submitted by:
Lee Pierhal
Wentworth, N.H.

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

This Month’s Photo



SGT LUKE KUENNEN, USMC

(Caption) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ ZIP _____

Leatherneck Laffs

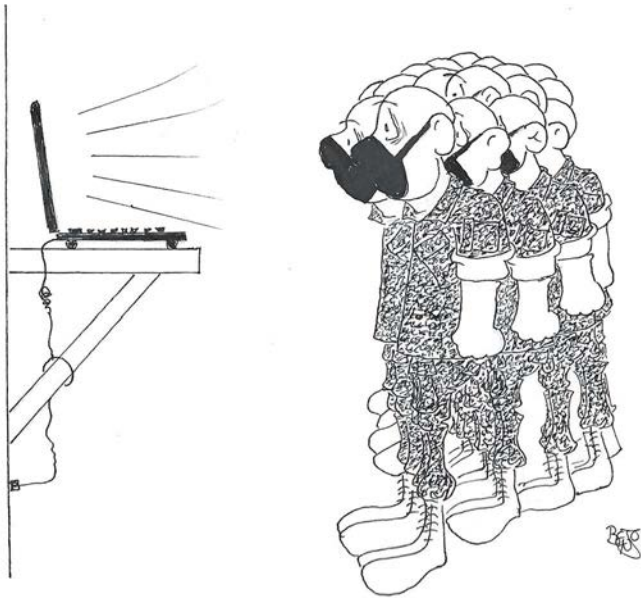
"Low enough for you?"



"So exactly how do we engage an enemy while adhering to social distancing protocol?"



"You just need a little black under your eyes to blunt the sun."



"This is Drill Instructor Sgt Bayer and today I'll be working from home! Bends and thrusts, ready ..."



"Sounds like someone is being defunded."

Cobra Gold - Thailand



"I hate the jungle."

Trident Juncture - Norway



"I hate the snow."



"I'd like to join the Space Force after I graduate."

HELL'S Half Acre

By Lynn Montross

On Nov. 10, 1777, the Corps was exactly two years old. On that day, Major Samuel Nicholas and his battalion of Continental Marines stood by in river craft along the Delaware River, south of Philadelphia, awaiting a British attempt to crash the blockade the Americans had set up to cut off the enemy's supply line. On the bank, tension grew in two forts, manned partially by Marine cannoneers and musketeers.

The time was the second anniversary of the founding of the Marine Corps. And the occasion was one of the hottest fights that Marines have experienced in their history.

True, the American Revolution took place a long time ago, but even veterans of today's warfare can respect a bombardment estimated at a thousand shot and shell every 20 minutes. This hurricane of fire leveled parapets, shattered palisades and made rubbish of blockhouses. Yet the small American force held out for six days and nights in a battered fort on an island in the Delaware River. When the survivors evacuated the ruins, not a cannon remained that was fit to fire. All had been ripped from their emplacements or pounded to pieces by the projectiles from the British shore guns and warships.

It was a fight to the finish during that November week in 1777. The Delaware was the lifeline of the British army which had occupied Philadelphia after defeating General Washington in the Battle of the Brandywine. If the rebels could hold their two forts below the city and deny navigation to the ships supplying the enemy, General Sir William Howe's redcoats would be starved out of the American metropolis.

A campaign on a broad, tidal river called for the know-how of an outfit such as the battalion of Continental Marines organized in Philadelphia by Maj Samuel Nicholas in November 1776. Since the two American forts were on opposite banks, their communi-

cations depended on boats which the enemy held in high esteem as targets of opportunity. It took skill and nerve to man these craft under fire, and the Marines had demonstrated both qualifications during the Trenton-Princeton campaign.

While Washington crossed the Delaware above Trenton on Christmas night in 1776, the Marines were ferrying Colonel John Cadwalader's militia detachment over the river below the objective. Next day they made another dangerous crossing through floating ice cakes, rowing more troops and artillery to the New Jersey side. Then came a week packed with action in which the Marines fought as infantry men, as cannoneers, and even as dragoons on one occasion when they were mounted for a raid deep into enemy territory.

Now, nearly a year later, in the autumn of 1777, history was repeating itself. Again, the outlook was dark for the American cause as three British armies occupied the points of a strategic triangle. Clinton held New York in strength, and Burgoyne was invading from Canada with a powerful force supported by the largest artillery train ever seen in the New World. Meanwhile, Howe was making himself at home in Philadelphia after defeating Washington in the battle of Germantown. Altogether, the King's generals commanded more than 50,000 well-trained and equipped regulars at a time when Washington had fewer than 10,000 ragged and half-starved recruits in his main army, then preparing to withdraw to Valley Forge.

Few Americans were foolish enough





to believe that General Horatio Gates' army of green militiamen would be able to stop Burgoyne in the valley of the upper Hudson. The only American military effort which held forth some hope of victory was the blockade of the Delaware, south of Philadelphia. If the two rebel forts could be defended, Howe's goose was cooked.

The first American line of defense was the double row of chevaux-de-frise across the river near Billingsport. This was a fancy French name for a very ugly contrivance. Structures of heavy timbers, weighted with rocks on the river's bottom, mounted steel-tipped wooden beams projecting upward at an angle just below the surface. One of these obstacles was capable of impaling and sinking a ship, and a triple row of them extended from Red Bank to Mud Island, linking the two principal American strongholds—Fort Mercer on the New Jersey side, and Fort Mifflin on the little island near the Pennsylvania shore. Upstream, protected by shore batteries on Red Bank, was the American river fleet, consisting of the frigate Montgomery, a brig, a schooner, two floating batteries, 13 row-galleys, 14 fire ships and lesser craft.

The Continental Army had few trained engineers, and both forts showed amateurish defects in design. Most of their guns

were emplaced to cover the river and few provisions had been made for defense against an attack from the rear. On the credit side, brick and masonry had been used as well as wood in the construction, and events were to prove that Fort Mifflin could take a surprising amount of punish-

Detachments of Marines from Maj Nicholas' battalion had a hand in nearly all the American preparations. Their main job was to man the craft of the river fleet as small arms marksmen, form boarding parties and double as crewmen of the row-galleys.

ment while affording more protection to the garrison than might have been expected.

Detachments of Marines from Maj Nicholas' battalion had a hand in nearly all the American preparations. Their main job was to man the craft of the river fleet

as small arms marksmen, form boarding parties and double as crewmen of the row-galleys. Some of them also volunteered for duty as cannoners and musketeers in the forts.

Whether Nicholas commanded them in person is doubtful for he and other officers of the Philadelphia battalion had a good deal of sea duty with the Continental fleet in 1777. Marines were attached in small contingents to land or naval forces, and for this reason, accounts of their participation are scant, even as the meager Revolutionary records go. There seems to have been little or no provision made for keeping written reports of the Marine operations.

Modern lithographs show Marine officers of the Revolution in handsome green coats with turned-back white facings, cocked hats, white waistcoats and breeches, and knee-length black gaiters. The enlisted men are depicted in green coats with red facings, white breeches and dark wool stockings. The historical fact is, however, that uniforms were rare among American forces of the war's early years. When Washington's army marched through Philadelphia before the battle of the Brandywine, the men put sprigs of evergreen in their hats to compensate for the lack of military smartness.

But if the Continental Marines along

the Delaware had no uniforms, they did have in common a great sorrow and a burning anger. Let it not be forgotten that during this eight-year war the enemy occupied, in turn the new nation's five largest cities—Boston, New York, Newport, Philadelphia and Charleston. Only the wealthiest residents were able to flee Philadelphia before Howe's entrance, and the Marines of Nicholas' battalion must have reflected bitterly that their homes were now billets for redcoats. Little privacy or liberty was left to civilians in the overcrowded city of 38,000 pre-war population, and it was inevitable that women should sometimes be insulted by British and Hessian soldiers recruited from urban slums and rural hovels. Moreover, Philadelphia had a large Tory faction which welcomed the invaders, and the officers in the scarlet coats found no lack of amiable feminine company.

In spite of the determination of the rebels to starve the enemy out of Philadelphia, they lost the first round. Early in October, the redcoats made a sally from the city to cross the river and surprise the unfinished American redoubt at Billingsport. The small garrison had no choice but evacuation after spiking the cannon and setting the works on fire.

Seamen from the British warships then managed to open a passage through the two lines of chevaux between Billingsport and the Pennsylvania side. The fleet commanded by Admiral Lord Richard Howe, a brother of the general, was thus in a better position to support the next British move—an attack of the land forces on Fort Mercer.

Gen Howe assigned this mission to Col Carl von Donop, who begged an opportunity to revenge his mercenaries for the humiliation of the wholesale Hessian surrender at Trenton the year before. He assured Howe that his 2,000 troops would overwhelm the fort and put an end to the blockade.

Donop, as it proved, hadn't made enough allowance for the resolution of his adversary, Col Christopher Greene, whose garrison consisted of 400 Rhode Island Continentals, plus small, special detachments of Marines, gunners and engineers. Greene was loaded for bear on the afternoon of Oct. 22, 1777, as the Hessians advanced on the rear of the fort from the woods to the southeast after crossing the river at Billingsport.

Veterans of present-day warfare are likely to look back with disdain at the outdated weapons and tactics of 1777. But a flintlock musket could kill you just



as dead as a machine gun—and more painfully after a low-velocity lead ball smashed its way through bone and sinew. And if the enemy didn't finish the job, it often took only an operation without an anesthetic by a military surgeon of that day to make a dead hero out of a seriously wounded man.

It isn't the destructiveness of weapons that determines the percentage of casual-

ties in any military age. It is simply a matter of how much punishment human nature can stand, and this factor never changes from one century to another.

lery "preparation" were trained and disciplined troops, but Greene had inspired his men with some of his will to victory. While the gunners waited with lighted matches beside the 14 cannons, he admonished his infantry:

"Fire low, men! They have a broad belt just above their hips—aim at that!"

Not a trigger was pulled until the Hessians deployed and advanced shoulder to shoulder within 50 yards of the abatis of felled trees and pointed stakes outside the 9-foot walls. Then the tornado of grapeshot and musket ball tore great holes in the ranks and swept the mercenaries back in confusion. A second advance was made from the river side, and this time the Marines got into the fight with the swivel guns of the row-galleys. Donop's troops, caught between two fires, broke and fled. They left behind them nearly 400 dead and wounded, including the riddled body of their commander. The Americans had 14 men killed and 23 wounded.

That same day the British had another setback when four frigates and a sloop ran aground in an attempt to draw near enough to fire on Fort Mercer. Before they could be extricated, the Marines and Sailors found the range with the guns of the floating batteries. Three of the British vessels escaped with damage to hulls and rigging, but the frigate *Augusta* blew up after flames reached the powder

Then the tornado of grapeshot and musket ball tore great holes in the ranks and swept the mercenaries back in confusion. A second advance was made from the river side, and this time the Marines got into the fight with the swivel guns of the row-galleys.



magazine, and the sloop *Merlin* had to be abandoned and burned.

Dispatches moved slowly in 1777, but a few days after the double victory on the Delaware the new nation joyfully celebrated the belated tidings that Burgoyne and his entire army had surrendered at Saratoga on Oct. 17 to a backwoods American army made up largely of short-term militiamen. This wonderful news supplied another incentive for evicting the redcoats from Philadelphia by means of the river blockade. Any such British reverse, following the disaster at Saratoga, would enhance the already good American prospects of securing a military alliance with France.

Of course, this new turn in the fortunes of war added to the enemy's determination to hold Philadelphia. Thus, the few acres of Mud Island took on a vital significance to both sides.

Generally speaking, the British controlled the Pennsylvania side, and the victory at Fort Mercer had tightened the American grip on the New Jersey shore. But Howe and his generals realized that their hold on the Pennsylvania bank would avail them little unless they could somehow contrive to mount batteries to fire on Fort Mifflin. It had been thought impossible to make use of the marshy islands at the mouth of the Schuylkill since they were flooded at high tide. Nevertheless, the British engineers were ordered to find a way at any cost, and they began the tremendous project of building

causeways and platforms. The work went on night and day, in spite of the loss of men by drowning, until five redoubts were installed. Each mounted two howitzers, three mortars and 10 guns ranging from 24- to 32-pounders.

Another threat to Fort Mifflin developed when the enemy discovered that the current of the river, deflected by the chevaux, had created a new channel between Mud Island and the Pennsylvania mainland. This enabled the British to anchor a floating battery mounting 22 cannon as large as 24-pounders within easy range.

On the morning of Nov. 10, when the redcoats opened up with everything they had, it is not likely that the Marines felt in a mood to celebrate the second birthday of the Corps. Mud Island had become the Hell's Half Acre of the American Revolution as the 300 defenders found what shelter they could from the storm of steel. More men could not be effectively employed in the small works commanded by Col Samuel Smith, and each night the Marines in the row-galleys had the task of taking the dead and wounded across the river to Fort Mercer and bringing back volunteers to fill the gaps. It was also necessary to replenish the supplies of powder and ammunition on Mud Island.

This is one of the occasions when the Revolutionary records give little satisfaction, and there is much that we don't know about the heroic defense of Fort Mifflin. Fortunately, we do have one blow-

by-blow account in the daily journal kept by Col Francois Louis de Fleury, a gallant French nobleman who came to America as a volunteer and distinguished himself throughout the war. Under the date of Nov. 10, 1777, he wrote this entry:

"I am interrupted by the bombs and balls, which fall thickly. The fire increases, but not the effect; our barracks alone suffer.

"Two o'clock. The direction of the fire is changed; our palisades suffer; a dozen of them are broken down; one of our cannons is damaged—I am afraid it will not fire straight.

"Eleven o'clock at night. The enemy keep up a firing every half hour; our garrison diminishes; our soldiers are overwhelmed by fatigue."

The rebels replied as best they could with their 16 cannon mounted in four blockhouses. But they were beaten down by sheer weight of metal, and on the 11th, Col Smith was wounded and replaced by Maj Simeon Thayer. Fleury refused evacuation after suffering a slight wound.

"The enemy keep up a heavy fire," he wrote; "they have changed the direction of their embrasures, and, instead of battering our palisades in front, they take them obliquely and do great injury to our north side."

Shells, also known as bombs, were hollow spheres of iron, filled with gunpowder and fired from howitzers. At night, the lighted fuses could be seen from afar as the projectiles described a fiery arc through the darkness and exploded with

deadly anti-personnel effect. The solid iron cannonballs were useful for battering down masonry or knocking out opposing guns.

“Heavy firing!” commented Fleury on Nov. 12. “Our two 18-pounders at the northern battery dismantled. At night. The enemy throw shells and we are alarmed by thirty boats.”

British feints at an amphibious landing made no headway against the vigilance of the row-galleys. But as the bombardment continued for a fourth and fifth day without any lessening of fury, it grew apparent that the hours of Fort Mifflin were numbered, in spite of the courage of the weary defenders.

“The walk of our rounds is destroyed,” wrote the valiant French volunteer on the 14th. “The blockhouses ruined and garrison is exhausted with fatigue and ill health.”

As Marines have discovered in modern warfare, a surprisingly large proportion of men can survive a heavy bombardment by taking cover. There could have been no deep casemates on Mud Island, but rubble is not to be despised in a pinch. This probably accounts for a casualty list of no more than 250 Americans killed and wounded, though an even larger number had to be evacuated because of illness and exhaustion.

By daybreak of the sixth day it had become apparent to all that Hell’s Half Acre was doomed. Any slight remaining hope vanished when Admiral Howe found that the new channel had widened enough so that he could bring most of his 34 warships within range. The great, white-winged vessels came upstream in a stately column—the ship-of-the-line: Somerset, 64 guns; the Isis, 50 guns; the Roebuck, 44; the Pearl, 32; and the other frigates followed by the schooners and sloops.

Even the British seadogs must have felt a surge of involuntary admiration when the battered fort replied feebly with the only two cannon left operative. Then any bombardment that Hell’s Half Acre had known before paled in comparison as the warships, shore redoubts and floating battery opened up together in an ear-splitting crescendo. No such terrific concentration of fire was ever known elsewhere in the American Revolution, and it is doubtful if the cannonade was ever surpassed in its century. At least 400 British guns, mortars and howitzers were pouring in tons of hot, screaming metal as a thousand or more projectiles every 20 minutes hit the smoking ruins.



Within an hour the last two rebel guns were silenced. By nightfall nothing was left but debris, and still a handful of dazed defenders, many of them wounded, had somehow managed to remain alive. That night the Marines in the row-galleys took them across the river to Fort Mercer, with Thayer and Fleury waiting for the last boat.

By daybreak of the sixth day it had become apparent to all that Hell’s Half Acre was doomed. Any slight remaining hope vanished when Admiral Howe found that the new channel had widened enough so that he could bring most of his 34 warships within range.

This was the end of the blockade for the fort on the New Jersey side could no longer be held after the loss of Mud Island. Lord Cornwallis was on the way to attack it with 2,000 redcoats when Greene wisely decided to set the works afire and withdraw.

Still, the strategic situation was not

as gloomy as it doubtless seemed to the Americans on Red Bank, oppressed by a sense of failure as they prepared for a hasty evacuation and retreat. If they had but realized, a treaty of alliance with France would be announced the following spring, and the British generals would find it expedient to fall back to New York, leaving Philadelphia to the Americans for the rest of the war. Even the hardships of Valley Forge would not have been in vain for Washington emerged with his best-trained army of the war.

These consolations, of course, had not yet been revealed to Americans at Red Bank who did not possess our unerring wisdom of hindsight. Marines and soldiers and Sailors—some of them may have wondered sadly if the new nation would ever win its independence in a war with the world’s greatest empire of that day. The future must have seemed clouded with doubt as they applied the torch to Fort Mercer while watching the row-galleys and other craft of the rebel river fleet being burned to save them from capture. But at least those Americans could pause for a last look at the smoldering ruins on Hell’s Half Acre and reflect with pride that Fort Mifflin had gone down fighting. It had held out for nearly a week against the combined might of a large British army and fleet, and at the finish the little river fort hadn’t been defeated. It had simply been obliterated. 🍷



MARINE CORPS ASSOCIATION
FOUNDATION'S INAUGURAL

GIVING DAY

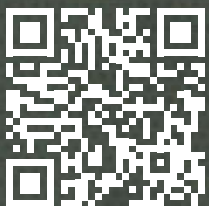
The Marine Corps Association Foundation's Inaugural Giving Day will be held on **Tuesday, June 8, 2021.**

MCAF's Giving Day is a 14-hour long campaign that brings together Marines, families, and friends of the Corps to raise funds for the Foundation's mission of supporting Today's Marines and enhancing their **professional development.**



Throughout the day, donors will have the opportunity to make an online gift toward this special fundraising effort. Together, MCAF will continue to provide Marines with the **support** they need to be **successful leaders.**

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Learn more at
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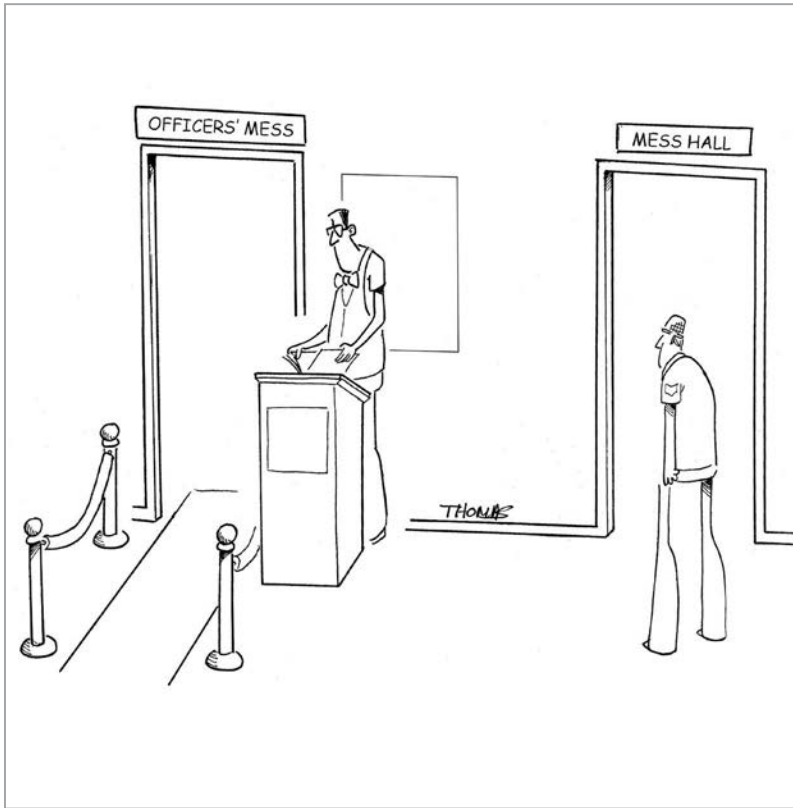
"Yeah, it's a bit moldy.
Consider it a virus protection."



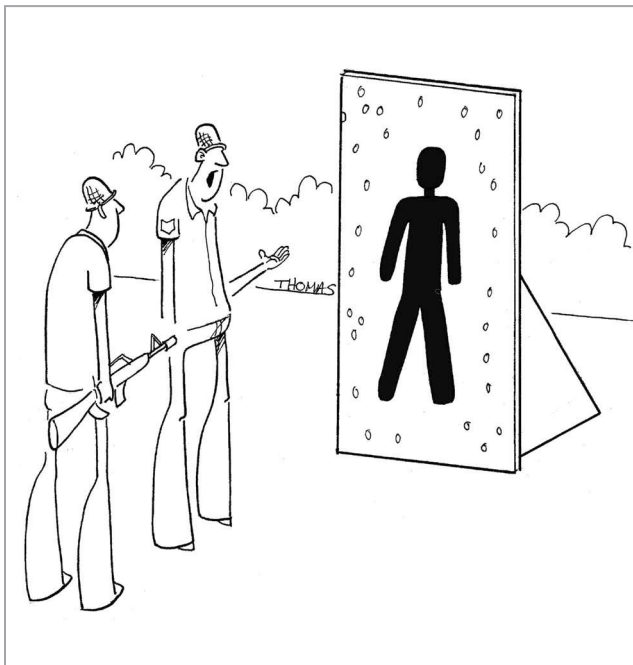
"Sir, the food has gotten over 50 dislikes."



"I heard you wrote me a bad Yelp review."



"Nope, not bitter enough."



"Private, we're going to reassign you to mess hall duty."



"I cook the stuff. I ain't gonna eat it."

MarDet Marines and the “Pusan Patrol” Across the Scottish Highlands

By LtCol James W. Hammond III
USMC (Ret)

One of the noted historical illustrations in Colonel Charles H. Waterhouse’s “Marines in the Frigate Navy” collection, “Repulse of the Highlanders,” depicts the 56-man U.S. Marine contingent serving with Major General Andrew Jackson’s Army at the Battle of New Orleans on Jan. 8, 1815. This Marine unit drawn from ships’ detachments of the U.S. Navy squadron based out of New Orleans was integrated into Jackson’s forces defending the city from the British in-

vasion. The painting shows the Marines on the breastworks beating back soldiers of the 93rd Regiment of Foot, also known as the Sutherland Highlanders. The Scottish veterans suffered nearly 75 percent casualties during their abortive assault that day.

Fast-forward about a century and a half after this last battle of the War of 1812, and a small, similar-sized detachment of U.S. Marines found themselves homeported smack in the middle of the recruiting district for the modern equivalent of the same Scottish regiment. Since the British Army reorganization of 1881 when

the 93rd (Sutherland Highlander) were amalgamated with the 91st (Argyll Highlanders), the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders carried on both units’ proud lineage and continued to amass a proud history of bravery in many wars and battles. They were honored with the title of “Thin Red Line.”

From 1961 to 1992, the U.S. Navy maintained an advanced naval base on the Holy Loch off the Firth of Clyde on the west coast of Scotland, and U.S. Marines were a small but integral part of the American forward presence there. Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarine Refit Site One provided a strategic logistical



Submarine tender *USS Simon Lake* (AS-33) with a submarine moored starboard side at U.S. Navy Fleet Ballistic Missile Submarine Refit Site One, Holy Loch, Scotland, U.K., 1988. Another submarine is visible inside the floating dry dock *USS Los Alamos* (AFDB-7). The Firth of Clyde, as it flows toward the Irish Sea, can be seen in the upper right. The town of Dunoon is just over the nearby hill. (Photo courtesy of LtCol James W. Hammond III, USMC (Ret))



COURTESY OF THE COLONEL CHARLES WATERHOUSE ESTATE COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

This painting, “Repulse of the Highlanders,” by Col Charles H. Waterhouse, USMCR, depicts the 56-man U.S. Marine contingent serving with MG Andrew Jackson’s Army at the Battle of New Orleans on Jan. 8, 1815.

and maintenance base for the U.S. Navy’s first generation of 41 nuclear-powered submarines armed with submarine-launched ballistic missiles. Operating in support of Submarine Squadron 14, this advanced refit site enabled the squadron’s nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs)—with two crews, the Blue and the Gold crew, for each boat rotating in shifts—to maximize their time at sea within range of their Cold War targets.

Major components of this afloat base consisted of a submarine tender specially modified to store and transfer ballistic missiles to and from the submarines. The tender’s crew of more than 1,200 provided extensive repair capabilities, spare parts and provisioning for the submarines. A floating dry dock, USS *Los Alamos* (AFDB-7), lifted submarines out of the water for required maintenance that optimized their readiness. Additional yard craft, including tugs, barges, a floating derrick and modified landing craft to transport personnel from the site to the pier, rounded out this mobile afloat advanced naval base.



COURTESY OF LT COL JAMES W. HAMMOND III, USMC (RET)

GySgt Steve Fisher, USMC, Guard Chief, Marine Detachment, USS *Simon Lake* (AS-33) hosts Capt Terry Markwick, British Territorial Army, aboard the ballistic missile submarine tender on the Holy Loch.

During the 21 years of the site’s existence, five different U.S. Navy submarine tenders were homeported in Scotland; two of them served twice on the Holy Loch. The complement of the ballistic submarine tenders included a detachment of 50-55 Marines. The detachment’s primary mission was to provide security to special weapons aboard the ship. This entailed manning of security checkpoints and patrols, on-call alert teams and forces, and expanded security for missile movements between the tender and submarines alongside the ship—all-hands events for the Marines that occurred on average twice a week and took anywhere from two to 24 hours to conduct. The attachment of Marines within the submarine community also created an important cross-cultural experience that contributed to naval integration. Navy personnel who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to work closely with Marines gained a solid appreciation for the Corps’ professionalism and high standards. It also enabled the nuclear community, very driven by procedures and checklists, to see and understand Ma-



USS *Simon Lake* Marines fire on the rifle range after a 3-mile run in “full kit” at the end of the 1989 Pusan Patrol. (Photo courtesy of LtCol James W. Hammond III, USMC (Ret))

rines’ skills in quickly adapting to dynamic security situations.

In 1987, USS *Simon Lake* (AS-33) arrived for her second tour at Site One. By this time, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders included two battalions, one on active service throughout the 1980s serving in various locations including Northern Ireland, Cyprus, the Falklands, and Germany, which gave little time for interaction with the U.S. Marines on the Holy Loch.

A Territorial Army battalion, akin to an American National Guard unit, was the reserve component of the historic regiment, then officially titled 3rd Battalion, 51st Highland Volunteers (Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders). It had company and platoon-size training drill halls across western Scotland, including a platoon based in Dunoon, the nearest large town to the American base and only a few miles from the Navy pier. Over the years, the U.S. Marines from the various tenders had formed a close relationship with these Argyll



COURTESY OF LTCOL JAMES W. HAMMOND III, USMC (RET)

Capt Terry A. Markwick of the British Territorial Army played an indispensable role in starting the Pusan Patrol while serving as infantry reserve commander for the local Argyll and Sutherland Highlander platoon in Dunoon, Scotland. He continued to play a vital role in coordinating all of the subsequent annual competitions, even after he transferred to the Royal Corps of Transport.

and Sutherland Highlander reservists, as well as with the Royal Marine Reserves command located across the Firth of Clyde near Glasgow. Social events, in part, facilitated these alliance military relationships but more important was the opportunity for the American Marines to participate in the British reservists' weekend training exercises, often serving as aggressors. These events provided mutual and unique training experiences for each ally. For the U.S. Marines, field time got them off the ship and allowed them to maintain a degree of proficiency in their infantry skills with the distinctive rough terrain and cold, wet and windy climate of the southern Scottish Highlands providing a challenging tactical environment.

Soon after their arrival in 1987, the *Simon Lake* Marines quickly continued these well-established contacts, particularly with the local Territorial Army platoon of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Over a few pints, the new U.S. Marine detachment commanding officer, Captain Bob Destafney, and the British platoon commander, Captain Terry Markwick, discussed how they could better leverage this relationship. They quickly locked onto the idea of organizing a squad competition between the two commands. A contest between each unit would foster a healthy rivalry while motivating improvements in tactical skills, testing physical and mental endurance, and providing important small-unit leadership experience.

In coming up with a name for the competition, the idea of naming it to memorialize the previous encounter of the two proud organizations at New Orleans died quickly after an attempt to present the commander of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlander regiment with a copy of the Waterhouse painting—a gesture that could be used as the dictionary definition for “that went over like a lead balloon.” Recognizing that a more friendly association was appropriate, they agreed on the name “Pusan Patrol” to commemorate the defensive battle at the beginning of the Korean War where U.S. Marines and the Scottish regiment served. On Sept. 5, 1950, the 1st Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, newly arrived from Hong Kong, had entered the Pusan perimeter line along the Naktong River as the 1st Marine Brigade was moving off the line to join the 1st Marine Division at sea for the amphibious assault at Inchon 10 days later. While a short association, it

Sgt Joe Lindsay gives a patrol brief to U.S. Marines during the Pusan Patrol squad competition. (Photo courtesy of LtCol James W. Hammond III, USMC (Ret))



Members of the U.S. Marine squad rest at the end of a 35-mile 3-day Pusan Patrol in 1989. (Photo courtesy of LtCol James W. Hammond III, USMC (Ret))

marked the shared sacrifice and commitment to excellence and readiness as Cold War allies.

The first Pusan Patrol was held in May 1988, starting on a Friday evening with a marksmanship competition using the small-bore rifle range at the platoon's company drill hall in Dumbarton. Saturday had both squads conducting all-day reconnaissance patrols through 10-12 miles of very rugged and wet terrain

across the backcountry of Dunbartonshire. Patrol orders and briefs were graded. Along the route, ambushes and planted “casualties” were encountered. Observers graded immediate actions, first aid techniques and stretcher carry procedures. Land navigation proficiency was also tested. Obstacles, including water crossings, were encountered that tested team skills. In the evening, patrol debriefs were conducted, and the squads



COURTESY OF LTCOL JAMES W. HAMMOND III, USMC (RET)

The 1989 winning squad poses with the Pusan Patrol trophy and a few extra rewards.

competed in enemy armor vehicle recognition drills and a nuclear, biological, and chemical (NBC) general information contest. After a very typical, rainy Highlands night, the competition returned to the company drill hall. After a few more general military information round-robin exercises, the squads competed in rifle and pistol disassembly and assembly relay races in which both patrol squads had to work both

American and British standard service weapons. While the final scores were close, in the end, the Scots won the initial Pusan Patrol competition. A British colonel arrived and presented awards, and after lunch and a few beers, the Marines headed back to the tender on the Holy Loch on the other side of the Firth of Clyde.

The second competition was held a year later over a similar weekend in

late May 1989. This time the patrol was conducted across 35 miles of Argyll hills and glens, requiring greater stamina over the three days. The 17 hours of daylight at this latitude assisted with map and compass navigation along the route, but again the Scottish Highlands provided challenging terrain and very wet conditions that demanded a high degree of tactical and land navigation skills. The patrol events were very similar to those encountered the year before, with numerous tactical challenges encountered as the squads traversed to checkpoints. Additional events included establishing an observation post along the patrol route, clearing a building and conducting a water crossing. During one of the evenings, a friendly—not scored—cooking competition was held. This provided each team the opportunity to sample the other nation’s field rations as prepared by “experts.” In the end, however, neither the British ration nor the American MRE won. Lance Corporal John Tucker’s “Cajun” preparation of a rabbit he trapped was the hands-down winner.

The final event on Sunday morning was a 3-mile squad run in full gear, or as the Brits referred to it, “a yomp in full kit,” with the marksmanship competition at the end. Like a biathlon, rifle scores were used to adjust squad run times, with misses incurring time penalties.



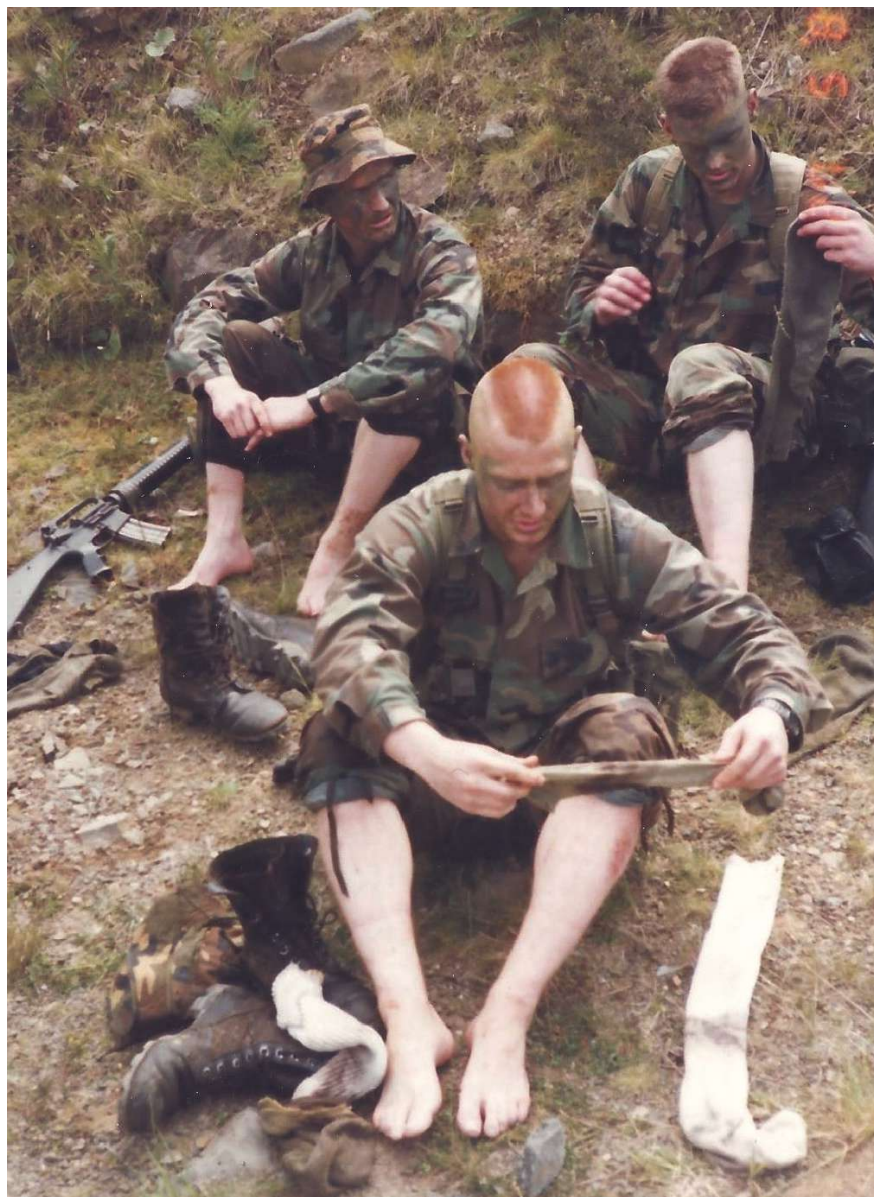
COURTESY OF LTCOL JAMES W. HAMMOND III, USMC (RET)

An awards ceremony was held at the end of the inaugural Pusan Patron in 1988 with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlander squad leader being congratulated for his victory.

Below: LCpl John Tucker skins a rabbit he trapped before cooking it Cajun-style—skills that greatly impressed the British.



COURTESY OF LTCOL JAMES W. HAMMOND III, USMC (RET)



COURTESY OF LTCOL JAMES W. HAMMOND III, USMC (RET)

The contest was close again; however, in the end, the U.S. Marine squad led by Sergeant Joe Lindsay won by a margin of 27 points out of a total of 1,360. The commanding officer of USS *Simon Lake*, Captain Gary Crahan, USN, presided over the awards ceremony that year.

The Pusan Patrol competition was held again in March 1990. This patrol followed the same pattern with similar events, and it appeared likely that the competition would go on for many more years; however, at the beginning of 1991, the U.S. and British governments announced that the base on the Holy Loch would be closing the following year. The rest of the year was a hectic period of site closing activities with the Marines returning to the United States by that December and the last submarine tender, USS *Simon Lake*, departing in March 1992. The fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989 had signaled the last days of the Cold War, and the new *Ohio*-class ballistic missile submarines entering the fleet along with their long-range Trident II ballistic missiles made an advanced

PFC S.J. Liewald changes his socks, a critical task when hiking, or as Brits called it “yomping,” in the wet climate of the Scottish Highlands

forward base in Scotland unnecessary.

Sea duty and working with allies provided many lasting memories for the Marines who experienced them. The Marines of USS *Simon Lake* who competed in the Pusan Patrol with their Argyll and Sutherland Highlander comrades especially remember the friendly rivalry and the unique and challenging experience of this competition across the Scottish Highlands. Not only did this contest and other training events foster lasting and mutual respect of our British allies, but it also expanded their combat skills and motivation as Marines. They were able to represent our Corps on a world stage while testing and improving their tactical proficiency and leadership. For many, the words of

the famous Scottish poet, Robert Burns, ring true to this day, invoking enduring and fond remembrances:

“Farewell to the Highlands,
farewell to the North,
The birth-place of Valour,
the country of Worth;
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands
forever I love.”

Author’s bio: LtCol Wes Hammond served on active duty from 1982 to 2005 including with 2/10 during the Gulf War and as CO, Co D, 2/12 with the BLT 2/9 during the landings into Somalia in 1992. He commanded the Marine Detachment aboard USS Simon Lake (AS-33) from 1988 to 1990. 🐾

SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

Instant Field Promotion

In 1957, I was stationed at Camp Hauge, Okinawa. One day I walked down to the base barber shop to get the old high and tight. I walked into the shop, placed my cover on the rack and took a seat to await my turn. After about 10 minutes I was called up and got my cut. Afterwards, I grabbed my cover and proceeded to walk back to my company. Every time someone approached me, they would throw me a high ball (salute me). I couldn't understand what was going on but just to be polite I would return the salute.

I arrived back to my quarters, walked into the head, looked in the mirror, and just about messed my drawers. I had accidentally grabbed the wrong cover off the rack because the one on my head was decorated with pretty silver captain's bars. I ran, not walked, back to the barber shop and switched covers before the captain ever knew that someone had snatched his cover.

Sgt Gerald D. Hardig
USMC, 1955-1958
Santa Ana, Calif.

But I Always Put My Boots on First

It was June 1957 at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island; I was with Platoon 126, Co C, 2nd Battalion and we had completed the week of conditioning and were beginning boot camp on this hot and muggy morning. Our drill instructors had selected Private Williams to serve as section leader, but Williams had not shaped up well during conditioning, so they announced a change of leadership from Williams

to Pvt "Mac" Mackiewicz. Mac did not do conditioning with us and had just joined Plt 126 that morning. As he was introduced, he stood, all 6-foot and 6 inches of him, looking like a dried prune in utilities much too large for him. He had an armful of new issue. Sergeant Bowman, senior drill instructor, told us that Mac was freed a few minutes earlier from the conditioning platoon where he had been for six weeks as he went from 400 pounds to 325. The next morning, I watched Mac, sitting atop his footlocker, struggle to get his utility pants on. I suggested that his difficulties were rooted in his practice of putting his boots on before donning his pants. He decried my analysis because he had always put his boots or shoes on before he put on his pants and he never had trouble until now. I observed that the difference was the 75 pounds he had lost. "Mackowitz," I said, "when you weighed 400 pounds the legs of your pants were so large that your boots moved through them with no resistance. But now, your smaller pants won't move over your boots."

He shook his head and continued his struggle until Sgt Madson yelled at him to take off his expletive boots so he could get his expletive pants on. Mac remained confused but he did as ordered. As he moved by me, Sgt Madson patted my head with his swagger stick and offered this advice, "Whitten, you do not understand stupidity. Never waste your time and breath trying to reason with someone doing something stupid." Sgt Madson ambled on into the squad bay, and Mac struggled through this

new and unfamiliar mode of dress mumbling repeatedly, "But I have always put my shoes on before I put on my pants!"

Dr. David O. Whitten
USMCR, 1957-1963
Sullivan's Island, S.C.

Pandemonium

On a 2nd Marine Division field exercise in 1975, we were 100 miles away from Camp Lejeune on Fort Bragg. Toward the end of the exercise, everyone just wanted it to be over.

As a corporal, I was the acting communications center chief as the real chief had stayed at mainside to run the 10th Marines Communications Center on Camp Lejeune. Being in charge of the regimental communications center meant setting up a schedule

that the Division communications center was shutting down. Phrases such as, "This is it for me. Going back. Been nice working with you," and, "Sorry, but the fun is over," could only mean that the field exercise was over. I said as much to a nearby Marine and pandemonium suddenly became the order of the day. Troops began literally throwing things around. Field jackets got flung into seabags, seabags got tossed into deuce-and-a-half's, radios got thrown into radio boxes and anything light was hurled into some sort of vehicle. And tents came down so fast there were literally troops still standing inside of them. I hadn't seen Marines so damned motivated since boot camp a year-and-a-half earlier. The troops darted about like circus monkeys that were having spare change and peanuts tossed in their direction.

Then my communications officer, Major Virgil Jones, came around. "What's going on here?" he asked harshly. "Sir, we just received a message that the Division communications center is going down, that the exercise is over," I replied. "Well, get that communication and bring it with you," he growled. "The colonel wants to know why his regiment is being secured early without his permission."

At that moment I would have paid to have a massive heart attack or, at the very least, to pass out. Alas, all I could do was tear off the paper from the teletype and listen as Maj Jones explained to me the meaning of the word "ass-u-me."

I don't remember what the colonel said to me that afternoon, but I didn't get

**"The colonel
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At that moment I
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for the troops to staff the communications center and to guard any classified material.

Near the end of this particular exercise, I received a series of sentences on our field teletype from the 2nd Marine Division Communications Center that, to me, indicated

busted. Moreover, the troops were all released from the field a few hours early. The moment of my greatest humiliation became a time of exultation for the entire 10th Marine Regiment that day.

Sgt Bob Skomars
Ironton, Minn.

Trigger Happy PFC

In 1964 and 1965 I was stationed at Gitmo. One evening two privates first class and myself, a lance corporal, were on duty guarding the fence line between the base and Cuba. All of a sudden, a small light came down the road. I told the PFCs not to do anything and that I would call the sergeant of the guard. I no sooner picked up the phone then one of my men shot the light out. Before finishing the call, I told the sergeant that we had shot at the light. The next thing I knew a giant light from our side of the fence line lit up an area as large as a city block, but nothing was seen.

The next day I was called to the colonel's office. I was scared as I had never in my three years spoken to anyone of that rank. I answered all his questions and was told that any shots fired at Gitmo had to be reported to the Pentagon. The next time I was on duty at that post, I walked down the road to where the light had been seen and found a U.S. Navy flashlight. I turned it in and never heard another word.

Gale A. Dahlke
Fox Lake, Wis.

Pesky Little Blood Suckers

I really enjoy reading Sea Stories in my monthly *Leatherneck* magazine. I laugh at various stories since I had encountered some of them myself during my 20 years in the Marine Corps. I started boot camp on March 1, 1965 and later arrived in Vietnam on Jan. 3, 1968, as a 0311 corporal and was assigned to Co E,

2/7, 1st Marine Division northwest of Da Nang. On one occasion, our company had just completed a patrol in the mountains near our combat base returning without any enemy contact. When we reached a clearing near the rice paddies, our captain said, "Everyone check for leeches." About 35 of us all dropped our utility trousers. The captain then said, "Someone keep your pants on in case we get hit." Everyone ignored him and quickly started checking for leeches. I hadn't felt any leeches but as I looked down at my legs, I counted 21 from crotch to ankle. You were supposed to use mosquito repellent or a lit cigarette to dislodge the little blood suckers. I just started pulling them off from the top down. After we ripped those suckers (no pun intended) off our bodies, we pulled up our jungle utes and continued back to our combat base.

As I looked down at my trouser legs, they were covered in blood and I continued to bleed for another hour. After leeches are pulled off, their anticoagulant causes continued bleeding for a period of time. Walking in the rice paddies or in the jungle mountains, there was no getting away from them. Some of the Marines in our company said they had seen leeches dropping out of the trees onto their hosts (us). A new leech starts out as a thread thin black wiggly type worm. After hosting on your blood, they can grow as large as your thumb.

GySgt Larry D. Williams
USMC (Ret)
Yuma, Ariz.

Snakes Creep Me Out, Too

Reading the Sea Story "Snakes Creep Me Out" by Capt R.D. Ramsey, in the December 2020 issue of *Leatherneck*, reminded me of my snake stories while serving in the Marines.

Every Marine probably has a snake story, but I have four. The first occurred in ITR at Camp Geiger. Sundays were days of rest, but you were not supposed to sleep on your rack during the day. Private First Class Smith was caught sleeping on his rack one afternoon and someone coiled a 3-foot snake which they had killed up on the rack next to him. Someone yelled, "Smith, snake!" Smith woke up, looked down, saw the snake, yelled, and ran straight through the screen door out of the squad bay.

The next three stories occurred in Vietnam where I served with "Kilo" Co, 3/1. We arrived in Da Nang and

Private First Class Smith was caught sleeping on his rack one afternoon and someone coiled a 3-foot snake which they had killed up on the rack next to him. Someone yelled, "Smith, snake!"

while waiting to be assigned to a unit, we were told to go to the hootches where there were cots underneath them. Each Marine took a cot and carried it on their shoulders. As one Marine threw the cot onto the ground, a snake with a red ring around its neck came out. The Marine stepped on the snake and it tried to bite through his boot. He repeatedly stomped on that snake, killing it.

My first day with Kilo Co, 3/1 as an 0331 was at Thuong Duc, which is about 25 miles southwest of Da Nang. That night I was sleeping on the dirt floor of a bunker. There was a C-ration box in one corner

for trash and I could hear critters rummaging around in the box. Suddenly, I felt something run up my leg and sit on my butt. A rat! All I could think was "Don't bite me! I don't want to go through the shots." The rat jumped off my butt and ran away. I found out why the rat ran. A snake slithered across my legs chasing the rat. I came out of the bunker like I was fired out of one of the mounted 155s that was behind the bunker. I slept on top of the bunker from then on.

The last snake experience was while on a patrol. We were walking on a rice paddy dyke and stopped for a break. I sat the M60 down and sat on my helmet. The paddy was empty of water and was just hard packed mud. I looked on the ground in front of me and there was a snake looking at me. I slowly slid my .45 out of the holster, yelled, "Fire in the hole" and blew the head off the snake. I looked down to my right and here comes another snake along the dyke. I tried to stand, and my helmet was stuck to my butt which caused me to fall backward into the paddy. I don't know where the snake went because when I got up it was gone.

Snakes creep me out, too. The only good one is a dead one.

Jack Stubbs
Albany, N.Y.

Do you have any interesting stories from your time in the Corps that will give our readers a good chuckle? We would love to hear them. Write them down (500 words or less) and send them to: 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 membership for the "Sea Story of the Month." 🐍

Surviving Spouse of Fallen Marine Launches Centralized Resource For Gold Star Families

Gold Star Family Resources, a new website that serves as a centralized hub of information for families of fallen servicemembers as they navigate life after loss, was launched in January by Erica Brophy, the surviving spouse of Major James Brophy, one of six Marines who was tragically killed when an F-18 collided with the KC-130J he was piloting off the coast of Japan in December 2018.

Through her assigned casualty assistance calls officer (CACO), Brophy received a great deal of information from the Marine Corps regarding survivor benefits, but in the months that followed her husband's death, she was constantly hearing from friends and other military widows about various organizations and resources that offered additional services and benefits—from emotional support and financial advice to scholarships and

recreational opportunities—that she and her two young children were eligible for.

As she became increasingly aware of what was offered to Gold Star families, Brophy recognized a need for a “one-stop shop” that could direct survivors like her to a list of the resources available to them.

“In the wake of the unexpected and unimaginably painful loss of my husband, I had to make some important decisions and found it challenging to navigate through this process with the lack of resources readily available,” said Brophy. “The resources I eventually connected with were life-after-loss changing for me, and I want to ensure it's easier for everyone who experiences a tragedy like this to connect with the right kind of support at the right time.”

As she worked to compile a list of resources, Brophy, who has had a successful career in finance and accounting and previously served as the director of the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society at

Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, also developed a checklist for survivors and a list of important documents needed to obtain benefits. She also writes a blog about her own personal experiences, provides advice such as “How to Help a Grieving Friend,” and features various organizations that support Gold Star families.

These invaluable resources can be found at www.goldstarfamilyresources.com on Facebook @Gold Star Family Resources and on Instagram @goldstarfamilyresources.

Sara W. Bock

Veteran-Owned Online Yoga Studio Offers Free “Mindful Warrior” Class

The Om Collective, a new online yoga and wellness studio founded by Army veteran Emily Plauché, offers several free live online classes for veterans, servicemembers and their families that aim to improve mental health and boost strength and resiliency while promoting calm through mindfulness.

On Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. EST, Marine combat veteran Hamilton Garces, who served in Afghanistan, teaches Mindful Warrior Yoga through The Om Collective. Garces has found yoga to help with the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and became a yoga teacher in 2017. He is passionate about helping others get through trauma and plays a variety of instruments, incorporating sound healing into his classes.

The Om Collective's other free offerings for veterans are community meditation on Tuesdays at 12:00 p.m. EST, and somatic yoga on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. EST.

Plauché, a certified yoga therapist, saw a need for an online studio platform during the COVID-19 pandemic. Yoga and meditation helped her through her own mental health journey, and she wanted to provide a safe space for others to practice yoga and meditation with community.

“I used to suffer from anxiety and depression,” said Plauché. “Yoga and meditation gave me resiliency and the ability to navigate life's up and downs.”

The Om Collective also part-



Erica Brophy, the surviving spouse of Maj James Brophy, pictured below, recently launched Gold Star Family Resources, a website and social media presence dedicated to ensuring that families of fallen servicemembers can easily access the benefits and resources available to them. (Photos courtesy of Erica Brophy)



Gold Star
FAMILY RESOURCES



COURTESY OF THE OM COLLECTIVE

COURTESY OF THE OM COLLECTIVE

Marine veteran Hamilton Garces, pictured here in Afghanistan, teaches Mindful Warrior Yoga through the online yoga studio The Om Collective on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. EST. The class is free to veterans, servicemembers and their families.

ners with nonprofit organization VA WAY to create wellness memberships for veterans in need.

To sign up for The Om Collective's free offerings for veterans, servicemembers and their families, visit www.theomcollective.us, click "Community," and select "Mindful Warrior Yoga" under "Community Events."

Annette Arceneaux

Operation Homefront Recognizes Marine Corps' Military Child Of the Year

Eleanor "Ella" David, daughter of Colonel George David and Medha David, was named Operation Homefront's 2021 Military Child of the Year for the Marine Corps. The high school senior, who resides in Falls Church, Va., has performed as principal violinist and violist in her school's orchestras and in community groups. Music, she says, has provided an avenue for connecting with other students when her family has moved around the globe. David also excels in academics and on the soccer field and serves as a chemistry and math tutor at her high school, where she helped develop virtual tutoring sessions in chemistry and calculus as she and her peers adapted to online learning in response to COVID-19. Living overseas in Japan, Spain and the United Arab Emirates inspired her interest in languages and cultures, and she has studied Spanish, Arabic, Latin and Brazilian Portuguese. She plans to study chemical engineering and viola performance in college.

The annual Military Child of the Year awards recognize eight military children between the ages of 13 and 18. Seven represent each branch of the Armed Forces

for their "scholarship, volunteerism, leadership, extracurricular involvement, and other criteria while facing the challenges of military family life." The eighth award, sponsored by Booz Allen Hamilton, is the Military Child of the Year Award for Innovation. The recipients were recognized during a virtual awards gala held on April 8.

Mike Lahrman



COURTESY OF OPERATION HOMEFRONT

High school senior Ella David, daughter of Col George David, was chosen as Operation Homefront's 2021 Military Child of the Year for the Marine Corps.

#TheHonorProject: This Memorial Day, Volunteers to Visit Arlington

On Memorial Day in 2020, Emily Domenech visited the grave of her grandfather, a World War II, Korea and Vietnam Army veteran, at Arlington National Cemetery. And when she offered on Twitter to visit the graves of loved ones of those who couldn't be there because of COVID-19 restrictions, her posts went viral. Her only regret was that she ran out of time to visit all fallen heroes, but she was determined to make sure that didn't happen again.

Domenech reached out to the Travis Manion Foundation, named for Marine First Lieutenant Travis Manion, who also is buried at Arlington, which joined her in creating #TheHonorProject.

This year, #TheHonorProject will deploy volunteers to visit Arlington National Cemetery over Memorial Day weekend to pay respects for those who cannot be there in person. Families of fallen military members who have been laid to rest at Arlington are encouraged to request a visit to their hero's grave, and volunteers will place handcrafted, combat veteran-made Flags of Valor wood flags at each gravesite. Pictures of the fallen hero and their headstone will then be shared via social media on Memorial Day using the hashtag #TheHonorProject.

Individuals can support this program by sponsoring a wood flag to help #TheHonorProject meet its goal of honoring 4,000 fallen servicemembers.

To submit a fallen hero or to sponsor a flag that will be placed at a servicemember's grave, visit www.travismanion.org/thehonorproject.

Elizabeth Aucamp



GySgt Kenneth R. Amos, 80, of Bugtussle, Okla. He enlisted in 1957 and later completed a tour in Vietnam. His awards include the Purple Heart with two stars.

HMCS John R. Babb, 73, of Leland, N.C. He was an FMF corpsman who served 28 years. He later worked for U.S. Customs and Border Protection and he was the commandant of the MCL Cape Fear Det. 1070.

Cpl James R. Beard, 71, of Idaho Falls, Idaho. He enlisted in 1968 and served with the 11th Marines as a 105 howitzer section chief in Vietnam. He later had a career in the security business. He was a member of the VFW and the DAV.

Cpl Glen D. Bressette Sr., 73, of Harvey, Mich. He enlisted in 1966 and went to boot camp at MCRD San Diego. He was a hydraulic mechanic for several airframes including the UH-34, CH-46 and CH-53. He served a tour in Vietnam at Marble Mountain Air Facility with HMM-165 where he completed 90 missions as a crew member. His aircraft was shot down on one emergency extraction of a recon team. His awards include the Purple Heart and three Air Medals.

SSgt Connie D. Burghardt, 91, of Britt, Iowa. He served in the Korean War with an artillery unit.

LCpl Howard R. Colegrove, 74, of Metuchen, N.J. From 1966-1967 he was assigned to the 7th Engineer Bn in Vietnam. He later had a career as a fire fighter with the Metuchen Fire Department, eventually serving as the chief. He was a member of the American Legion and the MCL.

Robert Copechal, 75, of Canonsburg, Pa. He was assigned to the 1stMarDiv during the Vietnam War. He was a member of the American Legion, the VFW and the Mon-Valley Leathernecks.

Max W. Daniels, 103, in Wall Township, N.J. He was a Montford Point Marine who served from 1943-1946. He later had a career with the Monmouth County, N.J., sheriff's department, rising to the rank of lieutenant. His awards include the Congressional Gold Medal. He was a member of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Montford Point Marines Association.

Richard L. Harding, 81, of Gaffney, S.C. He served in the Marine Corps in the late 1950s and later served with the South Carolina National Guard.

Benjamin E. "Butch" Hines, 71, of Arlington, Texas. His 23-year career

included two tours in Vietnam. His awards include two Purple Hearts.

Elwood "Woody" Hughes, 95, in Lexington, Ky. He was a Marine who served in WW II and saw action on Iwo Jima.

Cpl Harold L. Hughes Jr., 82, of Rock Pilot, Ore. He enlisted in 1956 and served for six years. He was assigned to 2nd Bn, 7th Marines, 1stMarDiv.

Joseph C. Jablonski, 87, of Washington, D.C. He enlisted during the Korean War and served with 1stMarDiv. Throughout his life he was dedicated to volunteer work, first as an EMT for an ambulance service in northern New Jersey and later as a docent at the National Museum of the Marine Corps. He was a member of the MCA.

Paul L. Johnson, 72, of Moscow Mountain, Idaho. He enlisted in 1966 after he graduated from high school. He served a tour in Vietnam in 1968 as a member of I/3/26. He was a machine-gun team squad leader on Hill 881 South during the Battle of Khe Sanh. He later earned a degree in animal science and had a three-decade career as an instructor at the Washington State University School of Veterinary Medicine.

Thomas G. La Luzerne, 76, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after his high school graduation.

PFC Manuel C. Leite, 99, of New Bedford, Mass. During WW II, he fought on Saipan. His awards include the Purple Heart.

Lloyd Lewis, 95, of Logan, Utah. Along with his twin brother, Boyd, he enlisted during WW II. They both fought on Iwo Jima and were in a foxhole together when his brother was killed. He later worked on the family farm and then became a teacher. His awards include the Purple Heart.

LCpl Albert J. Manganello Jr., 73, of Medfield, Mass. He was a radio operator with 1stMarDiv and served 14 months in Vietnam.

John R. "Jack" Marsh, 85, of Portland, Ore. He enlisted after his 1953 high school graduation.

Thomas J. McGinnis IV, 25, of Albuquerque, N.M. He enlisted in 2013 and served for five years.

Bernard C. "Bernie" McKinnon, 83, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after his 1956 graduation from high school and served at Camp Pendleton.

Alan P. Meindl, 90, of De Pere, Wis. He served for two years in the Marine Corps. He later had a career as an electrical engineer.

SgtMaj Walter "Wes" Melton Jr., 83, of Long Beach, Miss. He enlisted in 1953 and graduated from boot camp at MCRD Parris Island. He later returned to Parris Island as a DI in 1966-1968. He served multiple tours in Vietnam and received the Silver Star for actions on June 1, 1969, in Quang Tri Province when his company came under heavy small arms and mortar fire during Operation Virginia Ridge. According to the award citation, after numerous casualties, he "fearlessly rushed across 200 meters of fire-swept terrain to the forward area" to shout encouragement and directions to the Marines. "Seemingly oblivious to the enemy rounds impacting around him, he then led an aggressive counterattack against the hostile positions." During the course of the assault, then-GySgt Melton carried wounded Marines to covered locations.

In his last two assignments before his retirement, he was the sergeant major for MAG-31 and later was the sergeant major for MCAS Beaufort.

In addition to the Silver Star, his awards include the Navy Commendation Medal with combat "V," and gold star in lieu of second award, and the Navy Achievement Medal with gold star in lieu of second award.

Cpl Howard "Lloyd" Muirhead, 97, of Bella Vista, Ark. During WW II he saw action in the Pacific. He was wounded during the fighting on Okinawa. His awards include the Purple Heart.

Eldred Nicholas, 84, of Oneida, Wis. He served four years in the Marine Corps and was a veteran of the Korean War.

CWO-4 Walter Oldham Jr., 90, of Hutchinson Island, Fla. He served from 1951 to 1990. He had a degree in engineering and after his retirement from the Marine Corps, he had a career as a civil engineer. He was a member of the MCA.

Sgt Thomas Peña, 65, of Albuquerque, N.M. He was an MSG Marine. He later served his fellow veterans as a volunteer with Project Healing Waters.

Cpl Rene PonceAvalos, 22, in Okinawa, Japan. He was an engineer equipment operator assigned to Combat Logistics Bn 31. He died in a surfing accident while he was on liberty.

Frank J. Pontissa, 96, of Des Moines, Iowa. He served in the Pacific during WW II and was assigned to “Charlie” Co, 1st Bn, 28th Marines, 5thMarDiv during the Battle of Iwo Jima. After landing on Green Beach, he was on the island for 12 days until he was wounded and lost his right arm. His awards include the Purple Heart.

Jenel K. Richards, 33, of Wilder, Vt. She was an intelligence analyst who served one tour in Iraq. She was a computer science major who staffed an IT help desk.

Gordon C. Sage, 99, of Vancouver, Wash. He enlisted after his 1940 graduation from high school. He was a seagoing Marine who was assigned to USS *Maryland* (BB-46) as an orderly to the Battleship Division 4 commander. *Maryland* was moored on battleship row in Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked. He was shining his shoes to get ready for a day ashore when the attack began. *Maryland* was struck but was spared heavy damage and managed to bring all her antiaircraft guns into action against the attacking enemy airplanes. Along with other crewmembers, he helped supply the antiaircraft gunners with ammunition during the attack.

CWO-4 William R. “Bill” Schroeder, 90, of Boise, Idaho. He enlisted during

1946 and served for two years. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War, he served with Co B, 1st Bn, 7th Marines. He spent 35 years in the Marine Corps Reserve. He was a member of the MCA.

PFC Clifford J. Schultz, 81, of Lake Orion, Mich. He was a radio operator who served at Camp Pendleton in the late 1950s. He later had a 37-year career with Xerox and Eastman Kodak. He was a member of the MCA.

Cpl Stephen T. Smith, 74, of San Jose, Calif. He was a photographer at MCB Quantico from 1968-1970. His assignments included photographing anything from “grip and grins” and luncheons to parades, officer portraits, award ceremonies and forensics. He also was a photographer for the *Quantico Sentry*. After he left the Marine Corps, he continued his career in photography.

Col Robert H. “Bob” Thompson, 90, of Fredericksburg, Va. He served from 1953-1983 as an infantry officer. He received the Navy Cross for his actions as the commanding officer of 1/5 during the Battle of Hue City when he led his Marines to wrest the Citadel from a significantly larger North Vietnam Army force. According to the award citation, “When an attached company engaged a

well-entrenched North Vietnamese force ... [he] accompanied a reinforcing unit dispatched to establish a blocking position to prevent the enemy’s escape. Located with the lead elements, he personally coordinated supporting arms fire with the movement of the advancing Marines as they overwhelmed the enemy and accomplished the mission.”

Other notable assignments included battalion and regimental commands at MCRD San Diego and Commanding Officer, 9th Marines. After retirement he was active in his community and church and was an avid boater, pilot and golfer.

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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COURTESY OF JACK STUBBS

SOUND OFF
[continued from page 9]

I still didn't have my blood flowing and I fainted again. I was sent over to sick bay and I was scared to death as at that time I didn't know what was happening to me. Sitting there, the corpsman screams at me that I better not puke on his deck or I will be licking it up. I thought, "my God I can't even get sick." Someone looked at me and decided that nothing was wrong and sent me back. Thus, ended my first 72 hours in the Corps.

I'm proud to say that while I was a really long way from being the best recruit, I did manage to stay with my platoon and graduated on July 6, 1961. I later served with 2/8 and then Marine Barracks in Naples, Italy.

LCpl John P. Vaughn
USMC, 1961-1965
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Return to Marble Mountain

The excellent article, "Crow's Nest" by SSgt Jim Elliott, USMC, in the January *Leatherneck* reminded me of our visit to Marble Mountain. In April 2006 Lieutenant Colonel John Regal, USMC (Ret), took nine "Kilo" Co, 3/1 Marines who served from 1967 to 1969 and two civilian friends on a return trip to Vietnam. We had the opportunity to see several marble statues and furniture that the Vietnamese made. These statues could be purchased and shipped to the U.S. The trip and being able to visit areas we had been to in the late 1960s was definitely a worthwhile

Jack Stubbs and other Marines returned to Marble Mountain in April 2006 with two friends. The photo (above) was taken outside the ancient emperor's palace in Hue. Left to right, Judd Kinne, Charles Clark, Marco Forato, John Regal ("Kilo" Co, 3/1 CO), Dennis Moriarty, Geno Clemans, Jack Stubbs, Dennis Daum, Dan Callahan, Daniel Bradley, SgtMaj Haywood Riley and Bryan Lash. An aerial view (below) shows what Marble Mountain and the surrounding area looked like in 2006.



COURTESY OF JACK STUBBS

experience especially since we were with the Marines we had served with.

Fortunately, we did not have to pull ourselves with ropes to the top of the mountain. Steps had been cut in the rock even though they were steep. A Buddhist temple was at the top of the mountain and one in the interior of the mountain. There were some excellent views of the villages around the mountain and the countryside. It was easy to see why there were observation posts on the mountains.

Jack Stubbs
Albany, N.Y.

Marine Aviation Museum Shouldn't Close

The USMC should not shut down the Flying Leatherneck aviation museum in San Diego. Let it combine with the Air & Space Museum. I don't understand what's behind this effort to shut down this museum or prohibit it from going to the Smithsonian.

I am the father of two veteran Marines, and I expect better of the Corps. What gives?

Jon Cushman
Olympia, Wash.



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A True Patriot and Marine

I first met Charlie “Water Boo” or “Water Buffalo” Oman because of his size. In early 1967 he was with “Charlie” Battery working with forward observer Lieutenant Neil Bishop attached to Mike Co, 3rd Bn, 1st Marines. Charlie was training to be a forward observer. I was the company commander of Mike, 3/1.

On April 21, 1967, Mike was the designated Bald Eagle Company for the 1st Marine Division in Da Nang. This meant that for a two- or three-day period we were on call to assist and to be the ready reserve for the division. Any company needing immediate support would contact division and they would instigate Bald Eagle. We were called when F/2/1 was under heavy fire in the Que Son Valley, south of Da Nang. This was designated Operation Union which ended months later in the destruction of the 2nd NVA Division and lead to a book written by Otto J. Lehrack titled, “The Road of 10,000 Pains: The Destruction of the 2ND NVA Division by the U.S. Marines, 1967.”

Upon landing, one of our first casualties was Charlie. He had been shot in the head and was in bad shape. He was not evacuated until the next day because he was thought to be KIA. It was not until he groaned while being moved that he was


treated as WIA. Lt Bishop still describes it as a miracle. This started Charlie’s journey through many hospitals and surgeries and months of recovery most of which was at Naval Hospital Great Lakes in Illinois.

Thanks to Marines and good friends of Charlie, Brian Strasser, Jim Mullen, Donny Smith, Floyd Perry, Jim Pfeffer, Robbie Robinson, Mike Van Houtte and all the rest of Mike Co alumni, I received yearly updates. Charlie and I finally re-connected in the mid-1980s. Charlie always called me on Nov. 10, the Marine Corps Birthday. He owned a trucking company out of Texas, and we met for lunch in Kansas City. As I mentioned he was a big man and he walked into the restaurant with his bad leg and limited use of an arm. He was proud of owning his own business, but most of all, he was proud of being a Marine. The head wound had caused one side of his body to be crippled. But what was not crippled was his attitude and his courage. He has done a great deal with his life and never lost faith in Corps or country. Charlie is a trap shooting champion, basically shooting with one arm, a barbecue contest regular throughout the country and I just found out recently that he had initiated the one-armed Dove Association shooting contest in Texas. With his wife, Brenda,

he traveled throughout the country on both short and long hauls.

Tragedy has again struck him. While in Ohio, he was rehabbing a house that he inherited from a relative when he was stricken with COVID-19. It appeared that he was not going to be able to survive that, but he has. And then another huge blow; his wife, Brenda, died of a heart attack while he was recuperating. You have to think, what next? But those who know him know he will make it. We are all with you. Semper Fi, Friend.

Bill Wood
Leawood, Kan.

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 April 1. Given that the COVID-19 virus is still impacting future events, please continue to check with the reunion points of contact for the most up-to-date information.

• **5thMarDiv Assn.** (Iwo Jima veterans, Vietnam veterans, family members, historians and other interested persons welcome), May 12-16, Arlington, Texas. Contact Tom Huffhines, thuffhinesfmda.reunion@gmail.com.

• **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, (830) 460-0953, 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.

• **7th Engineer Bn Assn. (RVN)**, Sept. 9-12, Arlington, Va. Contact Norm Johnson, (810) 300-0782, nwgj@outlook.com.

• **1/27 (1968)** is planning a reunion in July, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Felix Salmeron, (469) 583-0191, mar463@aol.com.

• **2/4 Assn.**, Aug. 4-7, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Contact Pete Gannon, (954) 648-7887, diverplus@aol.com.

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

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

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

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

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

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

• **TBS 3-66 & 4-66/38th and 39th OCC**, Oct. 25-28, Las Vegas. Contact Jack Sheehan, (401) 255-0387, jacksheehanjtown@me.com, www.usmc-thebasic-school-1966.com.

• **TBS, Co F, 6-70**, June 10-13, Quantico, Va. Contact Col Tom Kanasky, USMC (Ret), (202) 366-3156, tikanasky@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 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.

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• **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

• GySgt Ollie C. Oglesby, USMC (Ret), oglesby02@gmail.com, to hear from **Cpl Cordell PRICE**, who was stationed at Marine Barracks NAS Lemoore, Calif., **1965-1968**.

• Skeeter M. Rains, (303) 518-5113, skeeter_rains@yahoo.com, to hear from **Ron STULLER**, who was assigned to the Marine detachment, **USS Ranger (CV-61), 1970-1971**.

• Kat and Chris Silva, (530) 339-8290, msbentee@gmail.com, to hear from or about **Eric GEORGE** from **Miami, Fla.**, who served in the Marine Corps in the **1960s** and/or **1970s**.

• Billy Hobbs, (325) 977-0379, coleche

24@yahoo.com, to hear from Marines assigned to **2nd Plt, Co B, 1/8, 2ndMarDiv**, between February and November **1972**.

• John Robinson Jr., 3031 Wall St., San Jose, CA 95111, (408) 469-9357, jmrobinson53007@gmail.com, to hear from Marines who served with **Co A, 3rd Plt, Marine Barracks 8th & I, 2001-2003**, or with **Co G, 2/1, 2003-2005**.

• Barry Erdman, beefoot2@aol.com, to hear from or about Marine veteran **Edward "Ed" MILLER** from Ohio, whose MOS was **0341** and who served at **Naval Station Bangor, Maine**, on barracks duty around 1980; was assigned to **Weapons Co, 2/8, MCB Camp Lejeune, 1980-1981**; was a **corporal** when he was discharged from the Marine Corps; and lived in **Houston, Texas, 1982-1983**.

• 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**.

• Dennis Pucello, pucellos@msn.com, to hear from or about Marine veteran **Horace LAUBACH**, who served as a second or first lieutenant during the **Battle of Tarawa** during **WW II**; graduated

from Middlebury College in Vermont; and taught English at Lansdowne Aldan High School after returning from the war.

Wanted

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

• Raymond Vols, (309) 292-5449, onepissedoffpirate@gmail.com, wants a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 2065, San Diego, 1978**.

• David M. Leary, (541) 661-6488, davidmleary@gmail.com, wants a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 2017, San Diego, 1979**, as well as any copies of **pictures of the DIs** that members of the platoon might have.

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



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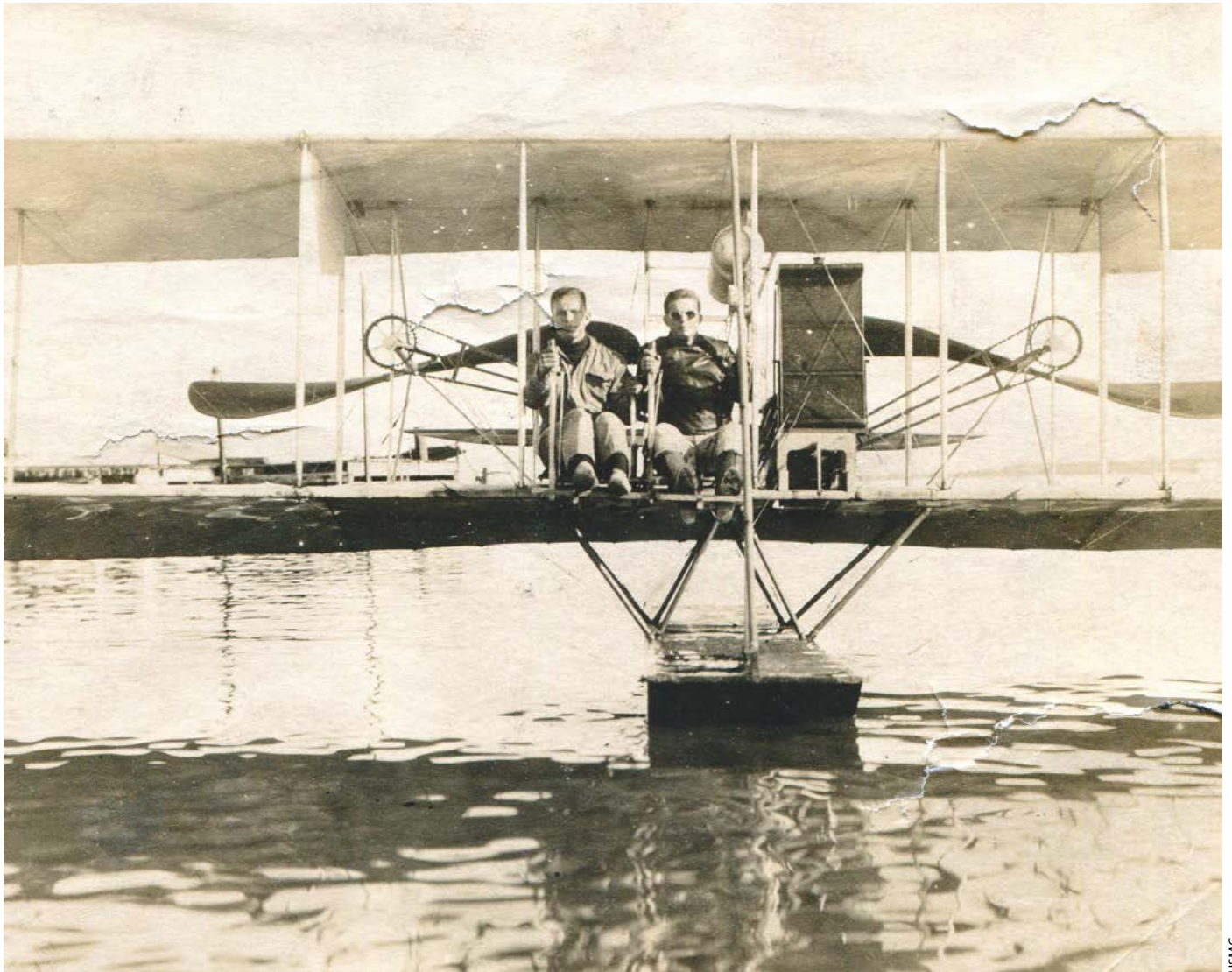
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Saved Round

By Nancy S. Lichtman



USMC

THE BIRTH OF FLYING LEATHERNECKS—May 22, 1912, is considered the birthdate of Marine Corps aviation because it marks the day that First Lieutenant Alfred A. Cunningham, the Corps' first pilot, reported to the Navy's newly established flying training camp near Annapolis, Md. Fellow Marine 1stLt Bernard L. Smith began his flight training shortly thereafter and the two men have the distinction of being designated Marine aviators No. 1 and No. 2 (and naval aviators No. 5 and No. 6).

The two flying leathernecks were key figures in the early days of naval aviation and were intent on demonstrating the invaluable support that air power provides to Marines on the ground and to the U.S. fleet at sea. The image above, which came from Lt Smith's personal photo album, features Smith, left,

and Cunningham, at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, 1913, in a Wright B aircraft. Smith and Cunningham, along with other naval aviators, deployed to Cuba in January 1913 to support annual fleet operations off the coast of the island nation. The aviators proved their worth to naval operations as they successfully carried out bombing runs as well as aerial photography and reconnaissance missions—from the air, a pilot could spot a submarine that was 30 or 40 feet below the water's surface.

Cunningham and Smith continued their contributions to Marine aviation throughout their careers; Cunningham retired in 1935 and Smith in 1920, although he was later recalled to active duty in 1937 and served until 1946. 🇺🇸

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Working with the Department of Navy, Sehlke Consulting's forward-thinking approach supports the Marine Corps transition from its legacy accounting system, SABRS, to the Defense Agencies Initiative (DAI) Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. This transition represents the first implementation of DAI by a Military Service and leverages Sehlke's unparalleled expertise in systems, business processes, and operating environments; and expertise with large system implementations and integrations.

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