

SEPTEMBER 2020

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

Leatherneck

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Comes to an End

75th Anniversary
Of Japanese Surrender

Arts in the Armed Forces—
Theater Bridges Divide
For Military, Civilians

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COVER: These 5thMarDiv veterans of the fierce fighting on Iwo Jima let no one doubt their joy at the announcement of the Japanese surrender. Commandeering a jeep and what musical instruments were available as well as an American flag and an effective sign, they held their own victory parade. Photo by PFC Charles O. Jones, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$2 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

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Letter of the Month

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

His last name was Bryant and he is the reason that I became a lawyer. I never knew his first name. In the Corps we only knew each other by our last names unless you picked up a nickname along the way. Mine was "Pappy." Bryant was an African-American man from Georgia. He had served with the U.S. Army in Vietnam and had earned an Air Medal as a helicopter door gunner. After his military service he returned home but was not able to adjust to civilian life and joined the Marines. He was what we called a retread.

If you had told me in high school and college that I would become a lawyer, I would have told you no way. I had come out of the drama department at Van Nuys High School where my name was on a plaque along with those of Robert Redford

and Stacy Keach. I had studied acting in college with the late Jeff Corey. My goal was to pursue a career in the entertainment industry.

In the early 1970s, racial strife was rampant in the military. Aboard Camp Pendleton there were many "good old boys" who proudly displayed Confederate flag emblems on their cars. There was even an active cell of the KKK on the base. I was a supply noncommissioned officer attached to the Infantry Training School (ITS) at Camp San Onofre at the northern end of Camp Pendleton. One day some other Marines came to me and said, "Pappy, can you help this Marine? His name is Bryant and he is going to go UA." Now in those days if you went UA, you became a fugitive because the war in Vietnam had not yet ended. Bryant had been ambushed by the KKK one night and beaten so badly he lost a testicle. I agreed to help not knowing at the time that Bryant would become my first client.

At ITS, Marines wore the utility uniform, a green shirt with the eagle, globe,

and anchor on the left breast, green trousers, a tan web belt with a brass buckle, and shined black leather boots. The ITS instructors wore blue helmets and they were all combat veterans. The first thing that I did was put Bryant in a tailored dress green uniform with his Vietnam campaign ribbons and his Air Medal so that the instructors could see that he was one of them—a fellow combat veteran. They began to treat him much differently. I got him evaluated by a civilian doctor and guided him through the process for securing a medical discharge.

On his last day before going home on a medical discharge, he approached me in front of the mess hall and told me that he was returning home to go to junior college on the GI Bill. We shook hands and said Semper Fi to each other. I never heard from him again and have often wondered over the years how life turned out for him.

That day changed my life. I had made the system work for someone that it was not working for. I got more fulfillment from that than I ever did from any theatri-

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Publisher: Col Christopher Woodbridge, USMC (Ret)

Editor: Col Mary H. Reinwald, USMC (Ret)

Senior Editor: Nancy S. Lichtman

Copy Editor: Jessica B. Brown

Staff Writer: Sara W. Bock

Editorial/Production Coordinator
Patricia Everett

Editorial Assistant: Katie Sinclair

Art Director: Jason Monroe

ADVERTISING QUERIES:
Defense Related Industries/Business:
Contact: LeeAnn Mitchell
advertising@mca-marines.org 703-640-0169

All Other Advertising Contact:
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EDITORIAL OFFICES
Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134
Phone: (703) 640-6161, Ext. 115
Toll-Free: (800) 336-0291
Fax: (703) 630-9147

Email: leatherneck@mca-marines.org
Web page: www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck

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cal production. And that is when I decided to go to law school after I got out of the Marine Corps and become a lawyer.

During my legal career I have defended many active-duty military and veterans. I have often looked back and remembered that day standing in front of the mess hall at Camp Pendleton and saying goodbye to Bryant.

William M. Paparian
Pasadena, Calif.

Camp Courtney 1959

Here's a short note in reference to the Sound Off letter, "Errors in Geiger Article," by Ted Kozak in the July issue. I was there at almost the same time as Ted. I was stationed at Camp Courtney in 3rd FSR from 1959 to late 1960. The 3rd Marine Division Headquarters was at Camp Courtney. If my old brain is still working, David M. Shoup was the commanding general in 1959.

Thomas Morrell
USMC, 1958-1964
Green Valley, Ariz.

He Earned His Polar Bear Patch In Iceland During WWII

My father, Ernest "Ernie" Leonardi, served in the Marine Corps from 1941 to 1945. Prior to his discharge he was an instructor at Parris Island as a sergeant. I recently found a letter written by, I believe, his staff sergeant. It was a wonderful example of Marine Corps life at the time.

My father was one of the first Marines to arrive in Iceland and was stationed there in 1942 before heading to the Pacific. He later became a police officer and retired as the acting police chief of Plymouth, Mass.

Stephen Leonardi
Plymouth, Mass.



Ernie Leonardi poses next to one of the huts that the 1st Marine Brigade lived in while stationed in Iceland, Feb. 9, 1942.

Ie Shima, Bonin Or Ryukon Islands?

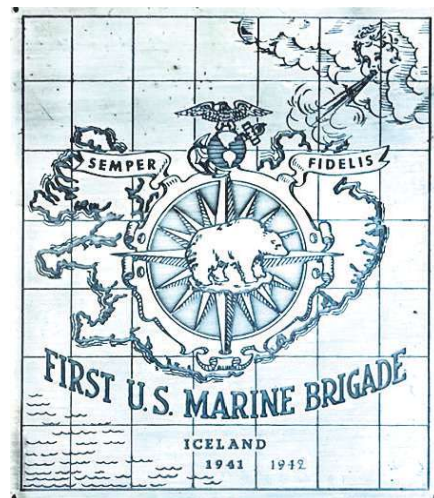
On page 50 in the June edition of *Leatherneck* the caption under the photo lists Erie Pyle as dying on Ie Shima, Bonin Islands. I always thought that Ie Shima, like Okinawa, were part of the Ryukon Islands. In 1964, while stationed at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, where I drove for the base commander, Colonel Early, I volunteered to go to Ie Shima to play baseball. I felt privileged to stand on the very spot where Pyle died. It is a strange coincidence that he died on my birthday, April 18.

Here is another coincidence. I just finished reading, "Battleground Pacific," by Sterling Mace, when I realized I had worked with Mace at Jones Beach State Park for decades. I was able to locate him in Florida and mentioned that I too, was a Marine and spent a year on Okinawa. On page 245 in his book he mentions Takabanare Island which was off limits to Marines since the end of World War II. Nineteen years later I took a boat to the island with a friend and we were treated like gods. I sent photos of Takabanare Island taken in 1964 to Sterling and he said it looked just like he remembered it in 1945.

William Ober
Huntington, N.Y.

Error in Airport Location

I would like to report a trivial misnomer appearing in this month's July issue. This error appears on page 30 in the story, "Guadalcanal Fighter Pilot." You'll find it in the title wording of the first picture on that page. The title reads: "Sam Folsom and his F4F Wildcat on Faeloa in American Samoa."



This 1st Marine Brigade metal plaque was given to Marines who served in Iceland in 1941 and 1942. These Marines were the only U.S. troops to wear the polar bear patch on their uniforms.

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—*Leatherneck* Editor

On the island of American Samoa, the airport was located at Tafuna. However, in neighboring British Samoa, the airbase was located at Faleolo. I served as a crew member on PBYs based at Tafuna doing air/sea rescue along the busy Hawaii-Australia air route. We often landed at that British island airport.

My flight log book shows its name as Faleole. The famed historian, Robert Sherwood, in his book, “History of Marine Corps Aviation in World War II,” calls the base Faleolo. However, the significant error is in the airport’s location and not its spelling.

Every month, I eagerly look forward to reading *Leatherneck* cover to cover.

Keep up the great work.

SSgt Walt Augustyniak
USMC, 1941-1945
Barnegat, N.J.

Memories of Khe Gio Bridge

Memories of the Khe Gio Bridge came floating back after reading the May Sound Off letter, “Dong Ha Mountain, From My Point of View,” by Cpl Ken Chambers.

From March to October 1969, I was assigned to Comm Co, Force Logistics Support Group “Bravo” (FLSG-B).

FLGS-B sent two daily convoys from Dong Ha or Quang Tri to Vandegrift

Combat Base, aka LZ Stud. The convoys supported Marines from 1st, 3rd, 4th and 9th Infantry Regiments operating in that area. Our Comm Co supplied the radio operators for the convoys and a small detachment at Vandegrift. I was involved with both from May to August 1969.

The convoys ran Route 9, passing through Cam Lo over the Khe Gio Bridge, past the Rockpile and on to Vandegrift. One convoy brought ammo, food, fuel for the POL, and a truck with frozen goods, but above all, ice for coolers. That ice was highly sought after. It was something to cool the Black Label beer and Shasta ginger ale. Being on the end of the supply line those two items were usually all that made it that far. After passing over the bridge, we would wonder aloud how those Marines survived in those conditions.

I tip my glass to all those security forces that kept Route 9 and the Khe Gio Bridge open.

Cpl Michael Radovich
USMC, 1968-1970
Mt. Holly, N.C.

The Recruit

I enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1953, along with two others from Illinois. Prior to leaving, we were given a special sendoff ceremony in Chicago. The main speaker



COURTESY OF CPL MICHAEL RADOVICH, USMC

Convoys from Force Logistics Support Group “Bravo” met on the Khe Gio Bridge in June 1969.

was Senator Paul Douglas at a mass enlistment ceremony conducted by General Scribner. Other state officials and military were in attendance.

We were then taken to the airport and landed in San Diego, Calif. I wondered what awaited us while we boarded buses to MCRD. The buses took us to the processing center where everything changed. We were then taken to the chow hall where my first meal was one banana, one small box of corn flakes, and one glass of milk, and was told we were overfed. We were given a hair cut, clothing and all the gear necessary to start our training as boots and then met our drill instructors.

We were in platoon formation and a recruit asked the DI for permission to make a head call. He was told to ask the recruit in front of him if he had an empty pocket and if he did, urinate in the pocket. The recruit did. I mumbled he doesn't have a brain in his head for what he did. A DI was behind me when I felt hands around my neck and all I could think was "I'm in big trouble."

I was at the rifle range one day where we learned how to fire our weapons and I did very good. We fired at the 500-yard line in prone position and my first shot was a bull's-eye. The next nine shots were Maggie's drawers.

The range officer came to check my weapon and I had forgotten to set windage and elevation. I settled for marksmanship and a good chewing out.

The Corps taught me self-confidence and self-esteem, and the Marine Corps was a good learning experience which I use today.

Cpl Lawrence Ruiz
Poplar Grove, Ill.

Somewhere My Buddy Waits

I read Mr. Frank Niader's poem, "Gold Star Mother," in the May issue of *Leatherneck*. Mr. Niader has written several very meaningful poems in memory and honor of his brother, Private William Niader, who was KIA on Kuniski Ridge, Okinawa, June 12, 1945.

In August 2010, the company I served with in Vietnam, "Kilo" Co, 3rd Bn, 1st Marines, held a reunion in San Antonio, Texas. I was asked to give the memorial message during our memorial service for the 161 fallen Marines and corpsmen who served with Kilo Co, 3/1 in Vietnam from 1966 to 1971. I read two poems as part of the memorial message. One was a poem by Mr. Niader entitled, "What Could Have Been." The other one was written by Ed Healy, the commander of the Kirk-Casey American Legion Post in my hometown,

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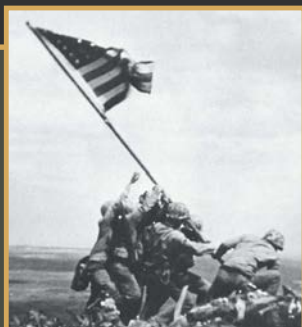
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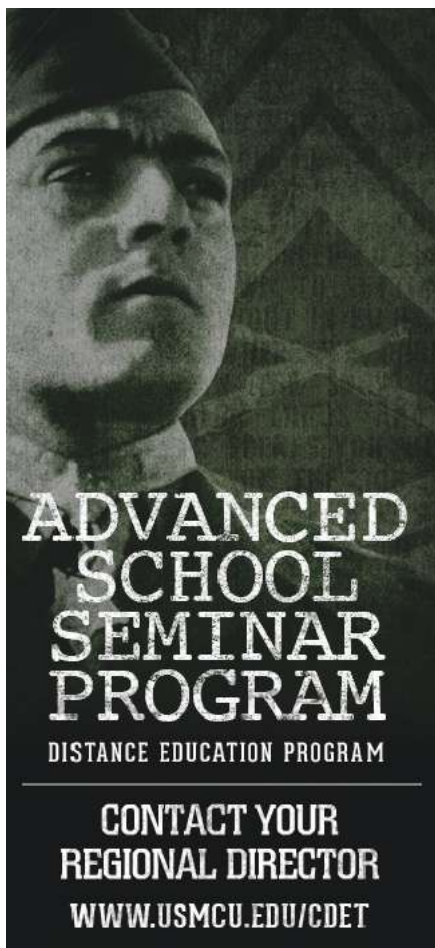
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Seneca Falls, N.Y. Mr. Healy was a retired Army officer and World War II and Korea veteran. He wrote, "Somewhere My Buddy Waits," for Memorial Day in 1970. It was still appropriate for Memorial Day 2020. The guest speaker at the reunion was then-Lieutenant General Joseph F. Dunford Jr., USMC.

Through shell-torn fields
he won so valiantly,
Are bramble grown as earth rises
to conceal?
Each trace of misery and suffering,
The hates of war become dimmed, but
livid hurts,
Time softened though they be, remain
deep scars.
The cold distrust that fill each passing
year,
Are but a mockery to sacrifice,
For time cannot erase from memory
The stench of battlefields
too dearly won,
Nor bring shell buried hopes
to life again.
My buddy tasted fame,
While honors came to him
posthumously,
There lingered here in disillusionment,
Grim human wrecks
of sordid memories,

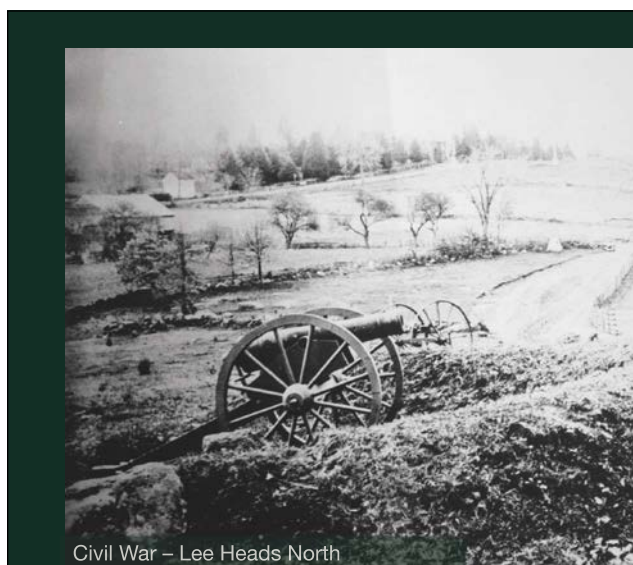
Who learned too late
such sacrifice was vain,
Beyond all earthly fear,
or greed, or lust.
Untrammelled now,
my Buddy's spirit lives,
He kept faith through
noble motive raised,
But died too soon to know
it was betrayed.
Beyond life's dusk, where "Taps"
shall sound no more,
Somewhere ... he waits.
—Ed Healy

Jack Stubbs
Albany, N.Y.

A Son's Search: Heroism Then and Now

It's become something of a cliché. My father, Martin Jerome Bloom, who died in 2011, a Marine decorated for bravery in the Pacific during World War II, rarely spoke about his combat experience. As kids, my brother, sister and I would have to practically beg Dad to tell us a war story. Those of the Greatest Generation held their feelings, and memories, close.

Was Dad fearful of getting in touch with old emotional wounds? Was he too proud to allow himself a moment of vulnerability even years later? Did



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he feel that, as a Marine who witnessed the worst of humanity in the caldron of war, he had to just suck it up and keep his experience well-hidden; better not to burden his innocent children?

Dad did reveal one personal episode from the war in which his life was spared because of a comrade's valor. In a particularly fierce battle in the Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshalls, a Japanese hand grenade landed in the middle of his huddled unit. One of the men jumped on the grenade, losing his life while saving the lives of my father and others. Many years later, unbeknownst to my father, I tracked down the hero's family in a small town in Pennsylvania and had a tearful conversation with the soldier's mother. I wanted to offer some thanks, or at least recognition, of her son's selfless act. I wanted a connection.

Amid the pandemic, like so many of us, I have been in awe of those who have sacrificed their lives for others. They cry out to us daily from the front pages. We who are safe wonder—could I be so brave, so selfless? What is the make-up of someone who can fight for his or her country, whether on the front lines of the COVID-19 “invasion of America,” as columnist David Brooks put it, or in the “Good War,” in a foxhole in the Pacific as enemy artillery rained down?

I weep for my father, for not knowing from his lips all of what he went through for others, for the incongruity of it all. Dad was a quiet man to a fault, self-effacing, seemingly absent of aggression. Is this really the same person who fought for liberty on one speck of seared island earth after another—Eniwetok, Saipan, Kwajalein, Parry—who stuck his neck out under fire?

I weep for myself, that I could never sit down with my father face-to-face and implore him to tell us all about it. What could I really know about my father without that? Perhaps I didn't want to know. I might have felt small and inadequate, insignificant in the big picture. What courage did I ever need to marshal on behalf of the greater good?

At this time of crisis, when heroes are celebrated but not always understood, I dug back into an old family file marked “Marines” to see what I could turn up. I spread out some of Dad's old, fraying papers from the war, trying to match the man I barely knew with the mission he served. A citation from the Secretary of the Navy John L. Sullivan presenting the Bronze Star Medal reads in part:

“For heroic achievement while serving as a Machine Gun Leader of Company E, Second Battalion, Twenty-second Marines, First Provisional Marine Brigade, during operations against enemy Japa-

nese forces, on Guam, Mariana Islands, from 21 July to 10 August 1944. When the right flank machine gun of an adjacent unit was silenced by grenade and knee mortar fire during an enemy assault on 25 July, Private First Class Bloom voluntarily left his own foxhole and, in the face of both friendly and hostile fire, reached the position in time to man the silenced gun, thereby contributing materially to repelling the Japanese attack ...”

After enlisting on Dec. 15, 1942, my father did boot camp in Parris Island, S.C., and paratrooper training at Camp Lejeune, N.C. He qualified as rifle sharpshooter with special qualifications machine gun crewman. He served in the Pacific from July 9, 1943 to Dec. 17, 1944.

To deepen my search into the fighting Marine's architecture, I recently read two classics of Marine memoir from the Pacific Theater: “With the Old Breed,” by E.B. Sledge, and “Helmet for My Pillow,” by Robert Leckie. Each is a beautifully realized, yet harrowing work, eloquent and uncompromising. Sledge detailed the unending rain and mud, the deprivation, and the “odor of rotting corpses” on the battlefields of Peleliu and Okinawa. Leckie also fought on Peleliu, as well as Guadalcanal and elsewhere. He wrote of the wantonness of war and its savagery, of seeing men tearing one another, of taking a last, hard look at a dead enemy combatant, his hand severed, open, palm upwards, clear, capable, solitary. The soldier as conqueror but, in Leckie's telling, anguished too, perhaps rather like something that clawed at my father's heart as well.

Marines like Sledge and Leckie can be found in my father's war diary, an unadorned 3-by-5-inch notepad, with jottings of friends and family to write to back home, battles fought, ships sailed on. One inscription reads, “Left Pearl Harbor Jan. 23, 1944 and arrived inside Kwajalein Lagoon, Jan. 31.” Another reads, “Attacked at sea June 15 by enemy torpedo planes and fighter plans. Shot down 4.”

Twenty years ago, my father firmly in retirement, I contemplated an attempt to break dad's reticence by telling him I needed information for an article about the war. But then, at 78, he suffered a disabling stroke, unrelated to combat, and our family had all we could do to mobilize to keep dad as well as possible. He lived another 11 years, head high, strong and dignified to the end. “My Marine,” my mother would say.

Mine too. While I treasure his medals, I wish I had more.

Marc Bloom
Monmouth Junction, N.J.
[continued on page 68]



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In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

BIZE, ALBANIA

ARGMEU Aviation Assets

Conduct Live-Fire Training

U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Venoms and AH-1W Super Cobras assigned to the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit and attached to the *Bataan* Amphibious Ready Group (BATARG) participated in a live-fire training exercise in Bize, Albania, June 22.

The exercise included Albanian allied forces and consisted of aviation ordnance delivery training aimed at increasing readiness and reinforcing the partnership between the U.S. and Albania.

“The BATARG and 26th MEU are excited about the opportunity to build on the live-fire exercise conducted by the U.S. Navy’s Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 28, Det 1, with our Albanian partners less than two months ago,” said Navy Captain Lance Leshner, the commodore of Amphibious Squadron 8. “This important

training, this time with 26th MEU aircraft, continues to reinforce familiarity and interoperability with our Albanian partners, reaffirming our commitment to not only this enduring relationship, but security and stability across the region. This valuable ARGMEU training ensures that along with the Albanian military, we maintain peak mission readiness in any environment, including the challenges associated with combat operations during a pandemic.”

Venoms and Super Cobras, commonly referred to as H-1s, are essential to sea-based air power and air superiority and together have the ability to provide close-air support, casualty evacuation from remote or austere locations, and transport Marines and Sailors from ship to shore—all from over the horizon.

“This training evolution was a great opportunity for our H-1 crews to integrate with a NATO ally through extensive

coordination and combined planning, all while physically distributed from our Albanian counterparts aboard our sea-based platform,” said Marine Captain Casey Low, an AH-1W Super Cobra pilot. “The evolution tested and demonstrated our ability to project power ashore, utilizing air-delivered fires from the MEU’s aviation combat element to support combined NATO forces.”

By utilizing the overland ranges in Albania, UH-1Y Venom and AH-1W Super Cobra pilots assigned to the 26th MEU were able to become more proficient in conducting live-fire tactical maneuvering in a challenging, mountainous environment.

“As a sea-based Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF), we are able to bring combat power ashore utilizing assets from our Aviation Combat Element—to include UH-1Y Venoms and AH-1W Super Cobras,” said Colonel Trevor Hall,



SSGT PATRICIA MORRIS, USMC

Cpl Joseph Krieter, a UH-1Y Venom crew chief with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 (Reinforced), 26th MEU, reloads an M2 machine gun during routine sustainment training in Bize, Albania, June 22.

the commanding officer of the 26th MEU. “We are grateful for this opportunity to conduct live-fire training in Albania and demonstrate this unique capability. Being able to train in a NATO-allied country improves overall coordination with our allies and partners in the region, which ultimately ensures a free and peaceful Europe.”

ARGMEUs operate continuously across the globe and provide the geographic combatant commanders with a forward deployed, flexible and responsive sea-based MAGTF. The blue-green team is fully capable of conducting operations across a full spectrum of conventional, unconventional, and hybrid warfare. Training such as this strengthens the execution of mission-essential tasks alongside NATO allies.

Together, the BATARG and 26th MEU consist of more than 4,000 Sailors and Marines who are operating in the U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations in support of U.S. national security interests in Europe.

U.S. 6th Fleet, headquartered in Naples, Italy, conducts the full spectrum of joint and naval operations, often in concert with allied and interagency partners, in order to advance U.S. national interests and security and stability in Europe and Africa.

Capt Melissa Heisterberg, USMC

OKINAWA, JAPAN

Remaining Ready: 31st MEU Completes Exercise Using Health Protection Measures

The 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit completed its Interoperability Exercise (Interop) at Camp Hansen, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, from June 23-July 13, incorporating detachments that recently arrived to the MEU. The associated training was designed to enhance coordination and familiarize subordinate elements with the unique mission set of the 31st MEU in preparation for follow-on exercises which will incorporate the entire Marine air-ground task force.

Training kicked off with a Communication Exercise (COMMEX) at Jungle Warfare Training Center that integrated personnel and equipment from Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, with the communications section of the command element, testing the 31st MEU’s ability to sustain high frequency communications across long distances from an austere environment.

“COMMEX is our only training event that focuses exclusively on communications. It provides an opportunity for radio operators, systems administrators, network administrators and technicians to



LCPL BRIENNA TUCK, USMC

Marines with CLB-31, 31st MEU prepare a tire load during an HST training exercise at Kin Blue, Okinawa, in June. The HST training, part of the MEU’s Interop Exercise, improved the unit’s proficiency at executing external lifts.



An MV-22B Osprey with VMM-262 (Rein) hovers overhead as Marines with CLB-31, 31st MEU attach a tire load to the aircraft during HST training at Kin Blue, Okinawa, Japan, part of the MEU’s June Interop Exercise. (Photo by LCpl Brienna Tuck, USMC)

employ their equipment without the pressure of supporting larger unit-level training objectives,” said Major Ryan Hamilton, communications officer for the 31st MEU. “Marines can make mistakes, familiarize themselves with their equipment, and learn what it means to operate in a remote location with no sources of outside support. This training is key in

the development of our Marines’ technical skills and prepares them for follow-on exercises and operations.”

BLT 2/4, which recently arrived from Camp Pendleton, Calif., worked in close coordination with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 262 (Reinforced), headquartered on Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Japan, to conduct fast



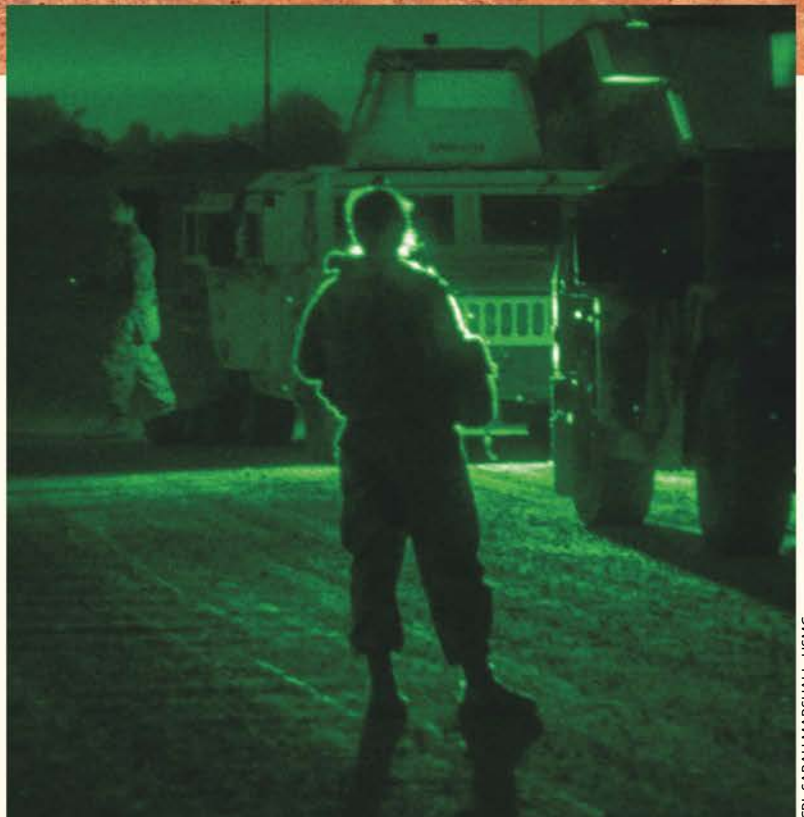
CPL SARAH MARSHALL, USMC

Motor T Marines Take Convoys Down Under

Motor transport Marines with Logistics Combat Element, Marine Rotational Force–Darwin conducted field convoy training at Robertson Barracks, Northern Territory, Australia, on July 9. The Motor T operators participated in terrain familiarization, day and nighttime convoy training, improvised explosive device detection, tactical combat casualty care, and radio communications skills. This training helps keep MRF–D postured to respond to regional crises from humanitarian aid to offensive operations.

Top: Motor T Marines with MRF–D venture into “the bush” at Robertson Barracks, NT, Australia, July 9.

Right: Cpl Sharon Knapp with Logistics Combat Element, MRF–D watches a convoy during night training, July 9.



CPL SARAH MARSHALL, USMC



CPL SARAH MARSHALL, USMC

Above: Prior to traveling on a convoy at Robertson Barracks, NT, Australia, July 9, 1stLt Christopher High, a platoon commander with Logistics Combat Element, MRF-D, prepares for training.



CPL SARAH MARSHALL, USMC

Above: Cpl Jrefugio Landaverde, a field radio operator with Logistics Combat Element, MRF-D, sets up radio communications during Motor T training in Australia, July 9.

rope training and on-off drills with MV-22B Ospreys.

“This was our first opportunity to coordinate with the aviation combat element and get Marines off the deck in Camp Butler. For many Marines, it was their first ‘live slide’ out of an MV-22. The Marines demonstrated proficiency during their live slides and proved they’re more than capable of executing this insert technique in a real-world mission,” said Captain Kenny Herman, “Echo” Company executive officer, BLT 2/4.

Fast rope training is critical to the BLT because many of the missions the 31st MEU conducts could require insertion and extraction of ground troops by aviation assets in locations where it’s not safe to land.

Combat Logistics Battalion 31’s Helicopter Support Team also trained with VMM-262 (Rein) during June and July, practicing their ability to attach loads to helicopters in flight. “Working with VMM-262 helps us increase our speed and proficiency at executing external lifts. We’re able to practice so that if we need to, we can get large pieces of equipment to locations that we wouldn’t otherwise be able to reach,” said Staff Sergeant Mitchell Buelow, CLB-31’s landing support chief. HSTs are especially important during humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions.

Other events included multiple live-fire ranges, reconnaissance and surveillance missions, and tactical air control training with the intent of honing coordination and specific skills prior to the MEU Exercise (MEUEx), which was scheduled to follow the Interop Exercise. While Interop allowed the subordinate elements of the 31st MEU to accomplish initial objectives, the MEUEx tests the ability of the entire MAGTF to operate as a team as a crisis response force.

“By working together during Interop, we developed a solid foundation to build on for MEUEx and any missions we will execute together in the future,” said Maj Brett De Maria, the 31st MEU assistant operations officer. “We are remaining flexible, constantly shifting our plans in order to get the maximum training possible while keeping our Marines safe from COVID-19.”

Across the MEU, strict measures have been enforced to prevent the spread of the virus: the wearing of masks, physical distancing, and the continuation of only mission-essential training in accordance with III Marine Expeditionary Force health protection guidance.

“The 31st MEU cannot stop training during this time. It’s our job to respond to crisis at a moment’s notice, and our nation

and partner nations throughout the region are counting on us to be prepared in case the worst happens,” said De Maria.

The 31st MEU, the Marine Corps’ only continuously forward-deployed MEU, provides a flexible and lethal force ready to perform a wide range of military operations as the premier crisis response force in the Indo-Pacific region. The 31st MEU will continue to conduct mission-essential training in support of regional security and stability.

1stLt Stephanie Murphy, USMC

STENNIS SPACE CENTER, MISS. Specialized Riverine Training Enhances SOUTHCOM Objectives

Twelve Marines and one Sailor with Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force–Southern Command were selected to participate in Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School (NAVSCIATTS) at the John C.

Stennis Space Center in Mississippi, July 7-18.

The exchange of tactics and procedures during the course will enhance the task force’s riverine advisor skills that are specifically tied to U.S. Southern Command’s campaign objectives.

“The SPMAGTF–SC will walk away from NAVSCIATTS with a greatly enhanced understanding of small boat operations and joint naval operations planning,” said Major Tony Cox, ground combat element officer-in-charge for SPMAGTF–SC. “This will better prepare the task force to excel in the future operations of our mobile training teams’ instruction to partner nation servicemembers.”

NAVSCIATTS is U.S. Special Operations Command’s Security Cooperation schoolhouse that provides strategic, tactical and operational courses to international military and law enforcement security

professionals. SPMAGTF–SC participated in information exchanges that included naval terminology, craft capabilities, riverine tactics, and immediate action drills along with a final exercise that incorporated all the knowledge acquired throughout the course.

“We’ve had an outstanding two weeks aboard NAVSCIATTS,” said Gunnery Sergeant Kinuwan Sharpe, ground combat element senior enlisted leader for SPMAGTF–SC. “We will carry the skills we’ve gained and lessons learned forward as we train with partner nations and continue to prepare for the next fight.”

This is the sixth consecutive year that SPMAGTF–SC has trained in preparation for deployment to the Latin American and Caribbean regions. The SPMAGTF–SC has mobile training teams with a mission to build a stronger partnership with host nation militaries and to increase proficiency and professionalism within their forces. The training conducted at NAVSCIATTS helps expand the subject matter expertise within the task force, enabling its Marines and Sailors to share experiences with partner nation forces.

The task force is on standby to rapidly respond to and assist partner nations with crisis response efforts throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

1stLt Heather Chairez, USMC

SAN DIEGO, CALIF. Summer Fury: 17 Squadrons Take on MAGTF Exercise

Marines with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, 1st Marine Division, and 1st Marine Logistics Group commenced the three-week Exercise Summer Fury 2020 on July 13. Units from Marine Corps Air Stations Miramar, Calif.; Yuma, Ariz.; and Camp Pendleton Calif., participated in the evolution, which showcases the Marine’s ability to fight as a Marine air-ground task force, a scalable and task-organized unit that commanders can deploy to combat and non-combat situations that require a rapid response by a self-sustaining force.

At the onset of the exercise, 3rd MAF planned to hone a variety of skill sets, culminating with the execution of a long-range strike supported by expeditionary advance basing concepts. Advanced basing allows the Marines to extend their operational reach by pre-positioning highly agile and specialized teams to sustain the force as they move further from established bases. For Summer Fury, the advance bases were specifically tailored to provide forward arming and refueling sites for fixed-wing aircraft, effectively extending the range the aircraft can strike in support of MAGTF objectives.

“We must ensure our Marines remain



CAPT AARON MOSHIER, USMC

A Marine with SPMAGTF–SC engages a simulated target during immediate action drills at NAVSCIATTS in Mississippi, July 10. The training helped prepare the task force to conduct theater security cooperation events with partner nations across the SOUTHCOM area of responsibility.



CPL SAMUEL RUIZ, USMC

Above: Marines with Landing Support Co, 1st Transportation Support Bn, 1st MLG prepare an M777 155 mm Howitzer for an external lift in support of Exercise Summer Fury 20 at Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range, Calif., July 14.

operationally excellent in an environment characterized by change,” said Major Michael Stremer, an operations officer with 3rd MAW. “This training provides an opportunity to refine our tactics, techniques and procedures for future conflicts.”

Seventeen squadrons representing all aircraft types from 3rd MAW participated, including AH-1Z Vipers, UH-1Y Venoms, F/A-18 Hornets, F-35 Joint Strike Fighters, CH-53E Super Stallions, MV-22B Ospreys, and KC-130J Super Hercules.

“The Marine Corps is constantly evolving to prepare and meet the demands of the Naval Fleet and is postured to confront current and emerging threats,” said Stremer. “3rd MAW is a force ready to meet any challenge.”

The 3rd MAW continues to “Fix, Fly and Fight” as the Marine Corps’ largest aircraft wing and remains combat ready, deployable on short notice, and lethal when called into action.

1stLt Charles Allen, USMC



CPL SAMUEL RUIZ, USMC

A CH-53E Super Stallion assigned to Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 conducts external lifts with an M777 155 mm Howitzer during Exercise Summer Fury 20 at Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range, Calif., July 14.



CAPT ROBERT L. "BOB" BOWEN, USMC (RET)

Marines from Co F, 2nd Battalion, 26th Marines make a final trek through a rice paddy to a Vietnamese village.

A Month in the Life Of 2/26 in Vietnam

By Capt Robert L. "Bob" Bowen, USMC (Ret)

Author's note: The following is based on the February 1967 command chronology for 2nd Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment. Since I was with 2/26 as a combat correspondent, I've also included my own remembrances of that month.

The battalion received 109 new enlisted Marines in February, 1967 and three new officers and one new Navy corpsman while 23 men from 2/26 rotated home that month with two Marines killed and 30 wounded. Four men went home on emergency transfer, four suffered non-battle injuries and four officers and five enlisted men were transferred within the Division.

Ross Webster, from eastern West

Virginia, arrived in country on Jan. 26, 1967, and was assigned to the 1st Platoon, "Hotel" Company, 2/26. When he arrived, his new unit was in the field on Operation Chinook, so the company gunny assigned him to a variety of jobs to keep him busy. Webster, a self-described "know-nothing" private first class, describes the work as "burning crappers, keeping the company area clean, and going to the Da Nang airfield to help move the body bags of KIA Marines from the cold storage area to aircraft for transport home." Despite this auspicious start, Webster would go on to make a career of the Corps, retiring as a major.

Four days after arriving in Vietnam, PFC Webster was on a midnight patrol



when he and his fellow Marines observed three Viet Cong (VC) guerrillas south of the Cu De River. The patrol opened up with some 60 rounds of small arms fire, killing one VC. A search of the area resulted in finding one .45-caliber pistol and a ChiCom grenade.

A lucky 104 of the battalion's men received out-of-country R&R in February. Fifty-one others received a few days off at the China Beach resort on the South China Sea near Da Nang. Other recreational opportunities including nightly movies, a recreation room equipped with TV and a weightlifting set, as well as enlisted, NCO

and officers/SNCO clubs were available. The battalion awarded 30 Purple Heart medals that month, promoted 42 men to corporal, 67 to lance corporal and five to private first class.

In late January 1967, Fox 2/26 was assigned to 2/4 for Operation Independence, a multi-battalion operation aimed at rooting out elements of the North Vietnamese R-20 Main Force Battalion and the local Q-16 Viet Cong Force Company. The operation was under the operational control of Colonel Robert M. Richards, the commanding officer of the 9th Marines.

D-day was set for Feb. 1. A few days prior to that, I accompanied a team of reconnaissance Marines and a scout dog and his handler on a patrol to select landing zones for the helicopters that would be ferrying in the Marines to conduct the operation. On D-day, I flew back seat with O-1E Cessna detachment commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jack Evans. Our mission was to mark the landing zones with rockets and smoke grenades which would guide three flights of jet aircraft to the LZs they needed to clear before the ground phase of Operation Independence.

I caught up with Fox 2/26 on Sunday, Feb. 5, and the hamlet of Minh Tan was in the Marines' crosshairs.

Gunnery Sergeant Lee Witconis, editor of the weekly *Sea Tiger* newspaper, and I arrived at Hill 65 around noon. After briefings on the operation to that time, we caught a resupply helicopter to the battlefield. 2/4's Co H was gathering a gaggle of prisoners they had captured earlier that day for transfer to Da Nang for interrogation. The company commander was Captain Walter E. Boomer, a future four-star general and assistant commandant of the Marine Corps. Fox 2/26 was opcon to 2/4 and was preparing to join the fight. Until then, the company, under the command of Capt John A. Linneman, had been held in reserve but it was time to go to work.

Capt Linnemann gathered his platoon leaders and described the mission. The company would move down the hill they were currently on and take up a position at the edge of a large rice paddy. They would wait there while Marine F-4 Phantoms and A-4 Skyhawks softened the target with rockets, bombs and napalm.

The second platoon was designated to lead the attack and enter the hamlet first after the jets had completed their work. Second Lieutenant Kevin Kramp, the platoon leader, had come up through the ranks and had turned in his gunner's bursting bomb for the brown bar of a second lieutenant. He ordered his men to



COURTESY OF THOMAS KINGSBURY

fix bayonets. There's something psychological about facing a bunch of Marines carrying rifles with bayonets glistening in the sun. It makes your knees turn to jelly. That was the image Kramp wanted to create.

The enemy, however, wasn't paying much attention to the Marines crossing the paddy and through the hedgerow to



CAPT ROBERT L. "BOB" BOWEN, USMC (RET)

Above: Gunny Lee Witconis and a Navy corpsman apply first aid to Cpl Moffett, who succumbed to his injuries.

Left: As an 18-year-old machine gunner, LCpl Thomas Kingsbury saw his first fire-fight during Operation Independence.

the hamlet within. They were hiding in their underground bunkers and tunnels, waiting to spring their surprise.

Private First Class Thomas Kingsbury, a machine gunner, still recalls that day. He had joined the Marine Corps in July 1966 and arrived in Vietnam in December. Assigned to the second squad, second platoon, Fox Company, 2/26, Independence



CAPT ROBERT L. "BOB" BOWEN, USMC (RET)

A Marine reacts to the sound of gunfire as an ambush is launched.



Leathernecks of 2/26 begin their approach to Minh Tan during Operation Independence.

were fired on 192 missions. There were 489 helicopter and 93 tactical (jet) air sorties.

At 11:55 a.m. on Feb. 9, Co F returned home to 2/26, but the following day, it was chopped to 1/1 for Operation Stone. There was no rest for the weary.

For the rest of the month, Fox 2/26 would be with its parent 2nd Bn, 26th Marines at Phu Bai, just north of Da Nang. At 10:42 a.m. on Feb. 20, Co F relieved Co E and assumed responsibility of the southern TAOR of the battalion's area of responsibility.

Lance Corporal Jim Bandy, a machine gunner from Park Forest, Ill., remembers the time well. He had dropped out of high school after his junior year to join the Marine Corps. Jim was afraid he'd miss the war if he waited until after he graduated to enlist. He was assigned to the 2nd Plt, Co F, 2/26. His dad had served in the Corps on Iwo Jima during World War II.

Bandy was on perimeter watch one night at Phu Bai. It was raining very hard, and Jim was in a hole covered by a poncho. As far as the men of 2/26 were concerned, perimeter watch was a cakewalk compared to being on an operation. He remembers one night being visited by a rat as big as a raccoon. "This guy was clearly not undernourished. And it felt right at home snuggled up to me," Jim said.

The "Nomads" of 2/26 would stick close to home and conduct mostly routine night and day patrols, ambushes and medcaps. They would write letters, watch movies at the club and enjoy an occasional steak.

Co F had missed most of the routine battalion action that month. For example, at a little after midnight on Feb. 5, while setting an ambush, members of a Co H patrol heard movement to their direct front. The Marines opened fire with 150 rounds of small arms and three M-79 rounds. An estimated 12 enemy returned an estimated 50 rounds of automatic fire, resulting in one Marine WIA. Enemy losses were unknown.

At 9:30 a.m. on Feb. 14, a patrol from Co E accidentally detonated a ChiCom grenade booby trap, resulting in four wounded Marines. Two of them were medevacked. On Feb. 19, the forward observer for Co G fired a mission on a suspected mine and booby trap field. One large secondary explosion was observed.

Sgt Curtis remembers that several small operations were run in the mountains after Co F moved to Phu Bai. His platoon leader, Sgt Wilbanks, took sick one night, and the company commander appointed Curtis as his replacement. "It was about 9

was his first operation and firefight.

"I emptied my M14 twice," he said. "I was scared to death. I was only 18. A Marine named McDonald took a bullet in the shoulder. He was next to me."

Corporal Melvin G. Moffett of Covina, Calif., was killed in the fighting. He had recently been appointed squad leader, and it was his first test under fire. Ambushes from underground are practically impossible to defend. With the amount of ordnance dropped on Minh Tan, there was no reason to believe anything was left standing.

Gunny Witconis, the *Sea Tiger* editor, rushed forward to help the Navy corpsman trying to save Moffett, but the young Marine was too far gone. The enemy bullet had entered his stomach, taking a piece of his web belt brass clasp with it. It bounced around his stomach before exiting through an inner thigh. He

had bled out by the time we got him to the medical tent at the An Hoa combat base.

Sergeant William Curtis was the first squad leader in the 2nd Plt. "After the firefight," he said, "the whole company moved towards the mountains. Capt Linnemann picked a very large open area and then had two circular lines of defense. He was concerned the enemy had many more troops than we and would attack in the dark when close air support was less likely. The enemy never came but did lurk in tree lines firing at us from time to time during the remainder of the operation."

When Operation Independence ended at 9 a.m. on Feb. 9, the final tally was nine

Marines killed and 35 wounded. Enemy casualties were 139 confirmed kills with 184 probably dead. Twenty-eight VC and 12 weapons were captured. During the nine-day operation, 1,805 artillery rounds



LCpl Jim Bandy

COURTESY OF JIM BANDY

CAPT ROBERT L. "BOB" BOWEN, USMC (RET)



CAPT ROBERT L. "BOB" BOWEN, USMC (RET)

Battered but not beaten, Marines lick their wounds and await medevac following an ambush during Operation Independence.

o'clock," Curtis recalls. "The platoon was ordered to step off at 2 a.m. and quietly move some distance to a hamlet," he said. "I had no platoon sergeant and no platoon guide. The platoon was under strength. Well, we made the move and arrived only to get in a firefight almost right away. Our point was hit in both legs, but they were million-dollar wounds. In the middle of machine guns and rifles blazing, one Marine entirely on his own jumped up and ran through the fire and threw the

point over his shoulder in a fireman's carry and raced back to cover."

Curtis continued, "I thought it pretty heroic. Much later, though still in the field, I wrote a recommendation for him to be awarded the Bronze Star Medal with V. It was written on a C-rat box. Later I learned he received no recognition. In fact, I never heard of anyone in Fox 2/26 getting any personal awards ... except Purple Hearts, and there were plenty of those."

A couple of months later, the battalion

received several second lieutenants, and Curtis lost his platoon. Co F's new CO, Captain G.E. Fort, recommended he transfer to the Combined Action Company, which he did, and spent the rest of his tour in charge of a combined action platoon, Tiger Hotel 3, in an old French fort at the Troui River bridge. Curtis would eventually receive a commission and retire a lieutenant colonel.

During the month of February 1967, there was a critical shortage of 20 echelon spare parts for the battalion's M274A2 utility trucks. Other areas of supply were described as good except in the areas of personal equipment and clothing.

Each company had its own operating mess hall, and for the most part, Marines in the field received two hot meals daily. The companies got their potable water from the battalion command post. Each company in the field had two M-107 water tanks, capable of holding 400 gallons. Daily sick call was minimal for 2/26 in February 1967. The battalion aid station handled the minor cases while the more serious cases involved either vehicular or helicopter medevac to the 1st Medical Battalion in Chu Lai.

Communications and electronics needed considerable upgrades to function as intended. The battalion had only one functioning teletype.

Battery B, 1st Battalion, 13th Marine Regiment provided direct support to 2/26 with its 105s. General support came from the 1st 8" Howitzer Battery, 9th Field



COURTESY OF LTCOL JOHN A. LINNEMAN, USMC (RET)

SSgt E.A. Smith, weapons platoon sergeant; Capt Linneman, 2/6 commander; and GySgt Edison Allen, company gunnery sergeant.



CAPT ROBERT L. "BOB" BOWEN, USMC (RET)

A Marine takes a prone position during an ambush.

Artillery Group. In February 1967, the 105s fired 1780 high explosives rounds, 57 white phosphorous and 26 illumination rounds. There were seven rounds of high explosives fire by the 155, along with 12 white phosphorous, and 26 illumination. The 81 mm mortars pitched in with 1204 medium-high explosive, 58 light high explosive, 196 illumination, and 74 white phosphorous rounds.

Winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese was a major goal of Marines in Vietnam. One of the best ways to accomplish this was through periodic county fair operations. 2/26 conducted such an operation in the hamlets of Thuy Tu and Quan Nam on Feb. 20, 1967. They established defensive positions to guard against any possible enemy attacks from within

the hamlets or from outside the cordon. Co H established a cordon around the two hamlets. Use of force, if necessary, would be kept to the absolute minimum, "consistent with the requirement." H&S Co provided a medical and dental detachment and logistical personnel to control and manage the work required.

A detachment from the 244th Psychological Warfare Company was called on to provide a tape recorder, film projector, generator, films and propaganda leaflets. They also brought along former VC who had joined government forces, to speak to the villagers about why he had deserted the VC. While the cordon was in place, local government officials conducted a census, registered those living in the two hamlets, introduced

themselves to the civilians and conducted psy-war operations.

Navy medical personnel assigned to 2/26 treated many Vietnamese during daily medcaps within the battalion's TAOR in February 1967. In addition, the following was distributed to the Vietnamese living in the area: 2,270 pounds of food, 720 pounds of clothing, 465 bars of soap, 250 bottles of Listerine antiseptic, 300 school kits, 2,800 pounds of wet garbage to feed pigs, and lumber and tin to rebuild two homes destroyed by fire.

Capt Linnemann was promoted to major and turned Co F over to Capt G.E. Fort on Feb. 28. At 3:45 p.m. that same day, a Marine from Co F accidentally shot himself in the leg while on patrol. He was medevacked. At 9:30 p.m., the battalion was placed on two-hour alert to move to northern I Corps to reinforce the 3rd Marine Division Forward.

Before moving north, things were heating up for 2/26 near Da Nang. Operation Gulf, a reinforced battalion operation in Elephant Valley, would consume much of their time in March, along with Operations Prairie I and Prairie II.

The move north did not occur until the middle of May, but when it did, it thrust the Nomads of 2/26 right in the middle of Operation Hickory near the DMZ.

Before striking its tents and heading home in February and March 1970, the 26th Marines had been actively involved in combat for 44 months. There were daily firefights, named operations, ambushes and countless walks in the sun.

The regiment had performed its mission well, earning a Presidential Unit Citation Streamer, National Defense Service Streamer, Vietnam Service Streamer, Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm Streamer and a Vietnam Meritorious Unit Citation Civil Actions Streamer. After returning home from Vietnam, the 26th Marine Regiment was again deactivated, just as it was after World War II. It lives on through the 26th Marines Association, found at 26thmarines.com. Its membership includes Iwo Jima survivors, Vietnam veterans and current and former members of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit—the only active Marine outfit carrying the 26th designation.

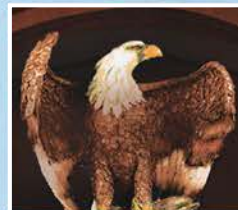
Author's bio: Capt Bowen is one of the last active-duty Marines assigned to Leatherneck magazine. He served three tours in Vietnam as a combat correspondent for the magazine and one tour with 1st Marine Division. He is the author of, "My Life and Lens, the story of a Marine Corps Combat Correspondent," which is available at The Marine Shop.



COURTESY OF LT COL WILLIAM CURTIS, USMC (RET)

LtCol William Curtis, USMC (Ret), holds an enlarged print of the lead photo in *Leatherneck* article, "Operation Independence," published in June 1967. Curtis was a sergeant squad leader in F/2/26 during Operation Independence.

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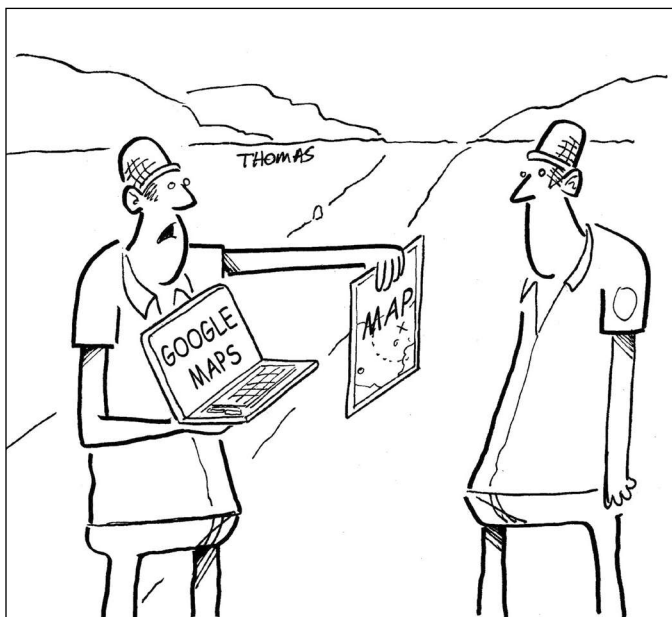
Leatherneck Laffs



"I'm not sleeping, I'm doing yoga.
This is my version of downward dog."



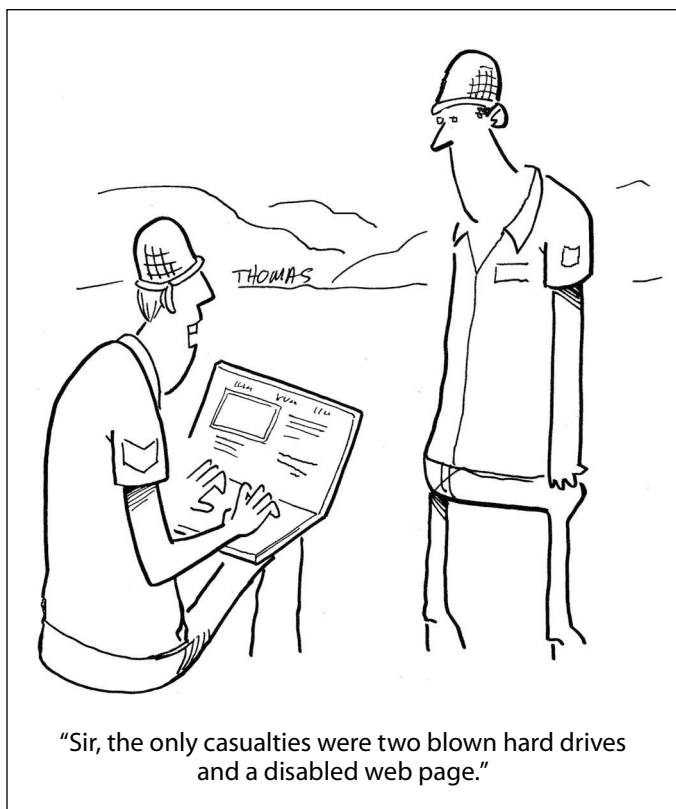
"I'm offended. I do not identify as a maggot today."



"Sir, you said you wanted a second opinion."



"Are there safe spaces? I have special trigger words.
I'm offended by profanity and shouting. That's about it."



A NIGHT ALONG THE RIVER

Editor's note: The following article is the third-place winner of the 2020 Leatherneck Writing Contest. Major Richard A. "Rick" Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest, which is open to enlisted Marines, through the Marine Corps Association & Foundation. Upcoming issues of Leatherneck will feature honorable mention entrants.

By SSgt Steven Rossa, USMC

Author's note: This is the story of the Marines with whom I served in 2010 in "Delta" Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, in the southernmost areas of Helmand Province, Afghanistan. More importantly, this is the story of every Marine and Sailor who has deployed to a combat zone over the last two decades of war. Our books, movies and TV shows are full of heroic battles and intense firefights, but that isn't everyday life in combat. This is the rest of the story.



Sgt Steven Rossa stands in front of The Castle, his unit's outpost in Khan-Neshin, Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

The evening sun had set, and everyone was meeting in the Combat Operations Center. Darkness was falling fast over the small plot of land now occupied by White Platoon. My convoy had just arrived after a long and dusty drive from our outpost through the sand and rocks that formed the barren wastelands north of the river. This was a strange place. You could see nearly every type of landscape all within a single patrol. We would start up in the rocky hills, moving south toward the farmlands. Along the way, we would pass a marsh created by the runoff water coming from the hills. Just beyond this small, waterlogged area were sand dunes that looked like a *National Geographic* picture of the Sahara Desert. Eventually, we would reach the flowering poppy fields beyond the sand, almost like an oasis. After making our way through the thick encasing mud around all of the crops, we would reach a tree line separating the contrastingly bright and colorful fields from the outskirts of the dark brown shadows of the villages. One such place had an area that the locals referred to as "the jungle." By American standards, it was more like a small patch of woods, but here with so much open desert, any bit of trees seemed like a rainforest.

Once we were inside the village, it felt like we were on another planet. We would joke that it felt like a scene from "Star Wars" on the desert planet Tatooine. The roads were shades of earth and stone as were the homes and mosques and nearly every other sort of structure. Short walls created courtyards and black-clad women who were covered head to toe were rushed into them as we walked by. Goats and other animals roamed free while little children watched curiously from their half-hidden positions. Not all of them were hidden, though. In fact, some of the older kids were so used to seeing our patrols they would come running for a treat, and sometimes we obliged with pieces of candy or bottles of clean water. One inhospitable greeter was the ever-present

wild dog. These beasts appeared to be something out of a werewolf movie. They didn't exactly make us feel welcome and often came too close for comfort.

Farther south, the Helmand River marked the end of our area of operations. It was a vast and deep river often occupied by fishermen on small boats and stretched the length of our assigned region. Back atop the hills, we gathered for our evening meeting within our dusty wooden office overlooking the southernmost occupied part of the country on one of our first nights in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

The meeting was short. No one wanted to be standing around taking notes on tomorrow's operations when everything was starting so early. Better to hit the rack so we could meet the timeline. I always had the best of luck and was permitted to stay with some of the officers afterward. You can imagine my excitement. My commanding officer was a young but very experienced captain. He was extremely smart and cared deeply for his men. No one ever wanted to disappoint him. Too often, enlisted Marines are burdened with lesser officers. I imagine the opposite is true as well, but I'll never admit that.

The captain wanted to see how the new camera systems worked and asked the Marine monitoring them to show us their capabilities. We started to play around with the settings, going from infrared to night vision and back to whatever settings he had customized. The captain asked how far out we could see, and we began searching for our other platoons, zooming in toward their last known positions and looking for the outlines of their armored vehicles. Then, as the cameras scanned slowly from right to left, we saw movement.

We had spotted Blue Platoon and were able to clearly track their vehicles several kilometers away driving through the night as if it were the middle of the afternoon and clear as day. It was actually quite impressive—not all of our gear worked so well. Anyone who has spent time around



While on patrol (above), Sgt Rossa's squad would pass picturesque sand dunes. Patrols also afforded Sgt Rossa and his Marines (left) the opportunity to question locals at a popular Helmand River crossing point.

the Marines knows that we don't always get the highest quality gear. I always think of that whenever I hear the phrase "military-grade" on TV.

As soon as we spotted the convoy, a bright light flashed across the monitor. The camera shook as we watched the enormous armored trucks come to a swift halt. There was smoke masking one of the trucks. It was expanding outward and upward into the black sky. On our screen, miles away and in the safety of our old shack of a command center, we could see what had just happened. The captain called out on the radio to the convoy. There was no need to wait for them to call us first. I directed my corporal to have the men prepare to respond as did several other Marines in the room. An improvised explosive device (IED) had just struck Blue Platoon.



Left: One of the swampy areas Sgt Rossa and his squad patrolled through in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

BLUE PLATOON TEAM LEADER'S STORY

Everything inside the truck went dark, and smoke filled the cabin. My ears were ringing, and I couldn't see much of anything.

It felt like we had only just arrived back at our outpost after being in the field for what seemed like an eternity. This outpost was named "The Castle," and it was quite literally a castle. Alexander the Great had built this small fortress during his journey across this part of the ancient world.

Once we were able to drop all of our gear, we thought we could finally get a lukewarm shower and a prepackaged hot meal, but that's when the call came in. No sooner had we sat down and loosened our boots, then we were tasked to investigate an area near one of the villages, back out again into the cold night. Apparently, a rocket had been fired from around there, and the top brass wanted to conduct a search for more weapons. An explosives technician was going out with us this time, so the information must have been half-decent. Feeling annoyed, I grabbed some comfort items to take along for the ride. I thought that if I had to go back out during my rest time, I would at least bring some entertainment. We had a small stack of books and magazines piled high by the door, so I took my share of the latest

assorted magazines and shoved them into my backpack.

I climbed back into my truck, grumpy and tired, and sat closest to the back by the rear doors. I was the team leader for this truck, accompanied by two junior Marines and our Navy corpsman. Up in the front were two more Marines who drove and navigated the armored vehicle. "Doc," our Navy brother, was sitting to my right, struggling with his loose and

The explosion sent our fully armored, multi-ton, mine-resistant vehicle into the air like a toy matchbox car, and then crashed it back down to Earth with a thud.

broken seat harness, and I could see the discontent in his eyes. I smiled and said, "You'll be all right," and told him to do his best with the straps. We drove through sand dunes piled high on both sides of us as we made our way to the village. "This doesn't look like a perfect place for an ambush," I said sarcastically. I ignored

the ridiculousness going on with our convoy and went back to finishing my magazine. The young Marine across from me looked nervous, so I tossed one over to him to take his mind off of things. This was his first deployment, and he seemed a little on edge. As soon as that magazine touched his hands, it all went black.

The explosion sent our fully armored, multi-ton, mine-resistant vehicle into the air like a toy matchbox car, and then crashed it back down to Earth with a thud. After some of the smoke cleared and we confirmed there was no follow-on attack, I began checking my men. I looked toward the turret where our gunner was supposed to be, but he wasn't there. For a moment, I thought he was missing—maybe thrown off the top of our truck—and was now lying in the sand somewhere by himself. He wasn't, though, and I saw him lying unconscious across the lap of the other Marine that I had just given a magazine. They were both unconscious and looked almost like a couple who had fallen asleep on a long, red-eye flight. For a brief moment, I nearly laughed at the sight. Doc was awake and fine, other than the fact that he had smacked his face on his rifle. He was spitting a little blood out and had a fat lip, but he'd live. I threw my harness off and jumped into the turret in case anyone began to approach, while Doc began looking over the guys. There were no onlookers, no locals converging and no ambush waiting for us. A lost opportunity for the enemy, I suppose. The guys began to come to, groggy and confused. I signaled over to the next vehicle that we were okay, but our radios had been damaged, and the truck itself wasn't going anywhere anytime soon. Other than the migraines that would last the next few weeks, we were all relatively fine. We licked our wounds and limped back to The Castle, too tired for a shower and no longer hungry for a shrink-wrapped dinner.

Back at the Operations Center, a team had been sent out to assist with the recovery of the downed vehicle and get all of Blue Platoon's men back inside The Castle without further incident. I asked if we could get a digital copy of the attack so I could send it to our higher headquarters in a report. In the video, after the explosion, you can make out a person standing up and walking away calmly behind some trees off-screen. This was most likely a spotter for the attack.

Over the course of our deployment to the Helmand Province, over half of our company had been hit by IEDs. During the month of December alone,



Returning from a night patrol in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, are from the left: Lt Clayman, Cpl Creel and Sgt Rossa.

A side view of the outpost, The Castle, and the bazaar outside the walls.



the pattern was every other day. I don't share this information with my family, and I suspect many of the guys from our unit don't either. It's not that I think any of us have regrets, I just assume it's something that's better left unsaid to our mothers who spent their nights awake, worrying about their sons. As far as they are concerned, their baby boys are home safe, and it's all over now.

As I put this story together, I spoke with the Marine who was inside the vehicle. He left me with this final thought, "We did the right thing, what we were supposed to do, and despite our wounds, it's through our stories we will live on forever."

Editor's note: All photos are courtesy of SSgt Steven Rossa, USMC.

Author's bio: SSgt Rossa enlisted in 2003 as an 0311 at the age of 17. He served with 3rd LAR Bn in a variety of billets from 2006-2012 as a rifleman to platoon sergeant. After transitioning to the Selected Marine Corps Reserve, he became a civil affairs specialist in 2015 and is currently serving with the Marine Corps Civil-Military Operations School at Quantico, Va. with the reserve instructor cadre. 🇺🇸



The flags of the United States, Afghanistan, and the Marine Corps are flown at The Castle.

Marine Raider Awarded the Silver Star



A Marine Raider recently was awarded a Silver Star during a ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. The master sergeant and critical skills operator (CSO) was serving as a team chief with 2nd Marine Raider Battalion in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel when his team was engaged by enemy combatants.

According to the award citation, during a heliborne raid into difficult enemy-controlled terrain in Southern Afghanistan, he led his team of Marine Raiders and partner nation forces in four hours of close combat with more than a dozen Taliban fighters occupying defensive strongholds. The team chief exposed himself to enemy fire to lead an assault across 30 meters of open terrain, attacking Taliban fighters entrenched in a bunker with his rifle and hand grenades. While he and his team took accurate enemy fire, the team chief again exposed himself by climbing on top of a building to employ a roof charge in order to recover a wounded Afghan soldier. With enemy fighters barricaded just a few feet away, the Marine heroically pulled the wounded man to a covered position in a valiant attempt to save his life while allowing the Raiders to engage the barricaded fighters with fragmentation grenades.

Throughout the four-hour close combat engagement, multiple team members bravely exposed themselves to enemy fire and employed small arms fire, fragmentation grenades, and shoulder-fired rockets to suppress or destroy additional enemy fighting positions. For their actions, a CSO, special operations capability specialist, and special operations officer also involved in the assault were awarded Bronze Stars with Valor for their actions, while four others were awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Valor. The combined efforts of this Marine Raider team resulted in the complete destruction of a determined enemy, including three high-value enemy commanders.



GYSGT LYNN KENNEY, USMC

At a ceremony aboard MCB Camp Lejeune, July 10, a Marine Raider was awarded the Silver Star for his actions while deployed to Afghanistan. During an engagement with enemy combatants in 2019, the master sergeant and critical skills operator led his team in four hours of close combat with Taliban fighters who were occupying defensive strongholds.

"The entire team remained calm, concise over the radios. They were controlled, efficient, synchronized, and ultimately, brutally lethal to end that fight," said the awardee of the men he led during the deployment. "One thing I did want to recognize is that this was not an isolated incident. This is the incident we are recognizing these guys for, but this happened

multiple times, with the same, if not, very similar circumstances and many of the Marines being honored today did the exact same actions and performed just as well multiple times. You guys humbled me throughout the entire deployment. It was an honor to serve with you." 🇺🇸

Throughout the four-hour close combat engagement, multiple team members bravely exposed themselves to enemy fire and employed small arms fire, fragmentation grenades, and shoulder-fired rockets to suppress or destroy additional enemy fighting positions.



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SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

Your *Military* Right

I arrived at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif., in the spring of 1967 to begin boot camp. With the Vietnam War heating up boot camp was intense. We trained and we drilled. We went to chow and we drilled. We went to training classes and we drilled. Everywhere we went, we marched and drilled. When I hit the bunk at night, I would catch myself counting cadence.

Regardless of who you are, if you drill for a long time, sooner or later, you'll make a mistake. Such was my fate.

We fell into formation after chow one night and the drill instructor called us to attention. He gave the command, "Right face!" For some strange reason, I performed a perfect left face. In a state of panic, I tried to recover. Faster than a sniper's bullet, I felt the DI's hand come down on the back of my neck. He spun me around and said, "Private Shitbird, don't you know your right from your left?" It flashed through my mind that if I said yes, he would punish me for disobeying his command. If I said no, he would think I was a dunce. I took the coward's way out and said, "Sir, No Sir!" In a blink of an eye, he hauled off and kicked me in my right shin. "Private Shitbird, your *military* right leg now hurts."

From that time forward I had PTTSD (post traumatic turn syndrome disorder.) Every time I heard a facing command, my right shin would tingle as if to say, "Don't screw this up again." I never did. Marine training was effective.

Sgt Mike Noble
Camp Verde, Ariz.

Warfare Training Goes Awry

I was drafted into the Corps in 1969, did my two years, went nowhere, did nothing important, picked up my DD-214, and that was that. A few years later, I went back and joined a reserve unit. As the Corps was losing personnel at that time, especially the reserve, I rapidly became a sergeant, then a squad leader. My squad consisted of five troops, a little short of its Table of Organization personnel requirements.

One weekend, my unit was transported to Marine Corps Base Quantico for irregular warfare training. One of the exercises was the clearing of a roadside. When our turn came, I lined up my squad and started them through the woods. The underbrush was thick, and the going was rough. A couple of my troops veered off to the flank. We were tactical, which meant no noise, so I tried to get them back with hand signals and stage whispers, but to no avail. I gave up and moved on with the remaining three troops.

Suddenly, the woods exploded with blank firing and progress came to a halt. Officers popped up out of the bushes and started critiquing us. One officer in a uniform that I did not recognize ran up to my two wayward troops and started chewing them out in a very thick accent. He told them, "You two need your arses reamed for going off like that!" Then he turned to me and barked, "And you need your arse reamed for letting them do it!" He was absolutely right.

Years later I picked up a book written by Major David Kilcullen of the Australian Army. I am not the brightest lightbulb in the carton, and it took

me a while to put two and two together, but it finally dawned on me. Did I get my arse reamed by the world's foremost authority on what is now called counterinsurgency? I will never know for sure but if so, I can tell you two things; I deserved it and I consider it a great honor.

SSgt Robert H. Scott Jr.
Salisbury, Md.

Dignity and Demeanor

I was a member of Basic Class 3-55. The Basic School commander was then-Colonel Lewis "Lew" Walt, future Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, and one of our tactics instructors was then-Major Kenneth Houghton, a veteran of Tarawa and Saipan and future commanding general of 1st Marine Division.

We were on a field exercise near David's Crossroads at Quantico. I don't remember if we were learning offensive or defensive tactics on this given day, but I do know we learned military courtesy and quick comebacks. We also were taught not to wear our rank on our utility collars when we were in the field.

My squad had taken a break and was sitting around swapping sea stories—although as recently minted "butter bars" we didn't have too many to tell. It was at the beginning of our tactics section of TBS, so we really didn't know the instructors all that well, especially Maj Houghton. However, we became acquainted very fast.

As we were sitting and swapping our stories, a Marine walked by, stopped, turned around and walked back to our squad. He said, "Don't you lieutenants salute senior officers?" We looked

at each other and made the logical and expected response, "Yes, Sir," to which the questioning Marine, Maj Houghton, asked why didn't we stand and render a hand salute as required. One of the braver members of our squad pointed out to Maj Houghton that he wasn't wearing any insignia to identify his rank.

Without so much as taking a breath he told us in no uncertain terms, "You should know by my dignity and demeanor I am a senior Marine officer who does not need to be identified by an insignia!" And then he walked off and later became one of our greater general officers, complete with dignity and demeanor.

Col Lanny A. Kope
USMC (Ret)
Sierra Vista, Ariz.

Members of the Press

In January 1984, I was a newly promoted captain assigned to the Ammo/Missile Branch, Material Division, Installations & Logistics, Headquarters Marine Corps. Subsequent to the Beirut, Lebanon Marine Barracks bombing on Oct. 23, 1983, congressional requests for information and attacks by press against the 28th Commandant, General P.X. Kelley, were at high tempo. While I was a new captain, I was a limited duty officer (LDO) with 15 years of prior Marine Corps service. I soon discovered that I was designated Mr. Vice for command dining ins and mess nights.

In mid-March, I was told to report to Major General Bill Carson. MajGen Carson wasted no time telling me that the DC/S I&L, LtGen Harold Hatch, was going to host a mess night and had tasked MajGen Carson's organization to coordinate

the planning and execution. To my surprise, MajGen Carson thanked me for “volunteering” to be Mr. Vice while assuring me I would receive any needed support.

The Commandant’s senior military aide, Col Joe Alexander, would also be attending. Oh, great! One of the Corps’ great historians and ceremonial experts would also be there. I recalled that the Marine Corps’ Drill and Ceremonies Manual stated that, “The success of the mess night depends on the vice president.” No pressure.

I recommended that the United States Marine Drum and Bugle Corps provide music and the Chaplain of the United States Marine Corps say “Grace.” I also suggested inviting the Royal Canadian liaison officer who could assist in procuring the highest quality cigars, knowing that LtGen Hatch and Gen Kelley enjoyed a good cigar. Last but not least, I strongly recommended

we run a “by the manual” officers mess to preclude shenanigans or deviations from the traditional schedule of events.

Finally, the evening arrived. At 1855 “Semper Fidelis” sounded. The head table entered the wardroom and moved behind their chairs. When the head table faced me at the rear of the wardroom that was my cue for the first report of the evening to Mr. President. At that time, I should have said, “Sir, the members of the mess are present!” However, what I actually said in my finest drill field volume voice was, “Sir, the members of the press are messing.” I immediately corrected with, “As you were! Sir, the members of the mess are present.” Imagine my embarrassment!

Following dinner and the lighting of the smoking lamp, Mr. President made his remarks and then introduced our guest of honor, Gen Kelley, who moved to the lectern with wine glass in hand. Always

a skilled orator, Gen Kelley toasted Mr. President for an outstanding mess night and thanked him for the invitation. Gen Kelley then turned to me, raised his glass and said, “Mr. Vice, you are absolutely correct in stating that the press has and is indeed messing in the good health of our Corps!” There was much laughter and applause and a more relaxed tone was set for the remainder of the evening.

My gaffe could never be erased, but at least the Commandant enjoyed the unintentional but appreciated jab at the unfriendly press.

LtCol Tommy L. Chandler
USMC (Ret)
Rainbow City, Ala.

Change of Direction at The Change of Command

On or about Feb. 5, 1967, Colonel Petty turned over command of MAG-13, Marine Corps Air Station Chu Lai, Vietnam, to Col Johnson. At the time, those of us in maintenance were working two shifts, 0600 to 1800 and 1800 to 0600. For some reason it was decided there would be a parade along with the change of command ceremony. Those of us who had worked until 0600 were chosen to be the participants in this parade. Staff Sergeant “Phitz” Pfizenmayer from the VMFA-323 electric shop was assigned to march the platoon that would represent our squadron in the event.

I remember thinking that there was a lot that could go wrong with this parade. We had been up all night, and I was pretty sure that “Phitz” hadn’t drilled anyone in at least a year.

All the brass was standing in a group as there was no reviewing stand. There were at least four platoons representing the different squadrons of MAG-13. The platoons were in a column that would march past the brass. VMFA-323, drilled by “Phitz,” was the third

platoon from the front. The column was 50 feet in distance from the brass and well-spaced between platoons.

We began to march, and when the column was centered on the brass, the first platoon drill sergeant called, “By the left flank, march.” The first platoon then marched about halfway toward the brass and came to a halt. At that point, the second platoon drill sergeant called, “By the left flank, march,” and repeated what the first platoon had done. I remember thinking that for a bunch of exhausted air wingers, who hadn’t marched for at least a year, we were doing very well.

It was just at that point that “Phitz” called, “Column left, march.” In an unforgettable moment in our squadron history, half of us executed a left flank, and the other half followed “Phitz’s” actual command. I’m pretty sure that Lieutenant Colonel Keller, who had been our commanding officer for approximately six days, was not very impressed with his new command’s marching abilities.

When I ran into “Phitz” later that year, he was teaching an F-4 central air data computer course at MCAS El Toro and had been promoted to gunnery sergeant. I did not remind him of this event.

Sgt Art E. Eggen
USMC, 1964-1968
Pacifica, Calif.

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



COURTESY OF LT COL TOMMY L. CHANDLER, USMC (RET)

From left to right: LtGen Harold Hatch, Gen P.X. Kelley and Capt Tommy L. Chandler, attend a mess night at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, Va., May 16, 1984. Gen Kelley, at the uniform board’s request, was test-wearing a new evening dress uniform which was later adopted.



STRIKE ONE!

75th Anniversary of the End of WW II

By LT J. Davis Scott, USNR

It was the day before the strike. Tokyo was less than 400 miles away. Tomorrow, a few minutes before dawn, we would be only about 100 miles from the Emperor's palace in the Imperial City. Tomorrow at dawn the task force would launch a history-making carrier-based attack on Tokyo.

In Ready Room No. 3, hangout of the Marine Corps fliers aboard our carrier, there was an air of expectancy. An air of solemnity. Just ahead was the biggest battle these kids had ever known—the ultimate of their long-ago eagerness to enlist, their arduous training in the sunny, peaceful skies over America.

They were concerned—that was true. But on that day these Marines, most of them green, untried 20-year-olds who had never tasted the bitterness of war, were finding time to relax. Tomorrow would come without sweating it out.

On a steel table at one side of the room a brown leather-covered phonograph

was blaring forth with, “I Guess I’ll Go Back Home This Summer.” Jim Hamilton was doing a dance all by himself.

Two rows back, in the comfortable leather reclining chairs, Major David C. Andre, squadron executive officer, and tiny Lieutenant Wallace Hathcox were playing checkers. Howard “Bones” Sankey, Deane Erickson and Wendell Browning were kibitzing.

In another corner, George Murray, dreaming of the son whom he had never seen, and Bob Cook, talking about Kansas City and his wife, were adding the finest of edges to their jungle knives.

Near the door through which they’d go tomorrow to the flight deck was Maj Herman “Hap” Hansen, the handsome, 25-year-old commander of the squadron. Around him, sprawled on the floor and in nearby chairs, were some of his boys—Shanty Callahan, who used to work in an office in New York’s Radio City; the squadron funny man, Junie “Mung Ho” Lohan; Pinky

Farmer, from out Oklahoma way; Norm Whittredge, who never let you forget he was a Bostonian; Randolph “Biscuit” Smith, whose profile was the movie hero type, and quiet, serious Bert Hanson.

The major was talking about tactics. He was a Guadalcanal veteran—recipient of two DFCs, an Air Medal and a Purple Heart—and his pilots listened intently to every word. “Say, Major, what about this Tokyo business?” asked Lohan. “What about it?” said the major. “I’m not sure. Tokyo is as new to me as it is to you.”

Hunched over their cards, Maj Everett Alward, seeing war for the first time as a sky commander, but remembering that Sunday morning when he was a green, Annapolis-trained, Marine infantry second lieutenant at Pearl Harbor, and laughing Missouri Bob Cies were playing gin rummy. It seemed they were always playing and Cies was always losing.

War correspondent Bill McGaffin, who spent more time in the Marine

Above: Members of the flight deck crew of an aircraft carrier prepare to give a Marine fighter pilot the signal to take off. (Leatherneck Archives)

ready room than anywhere else aboard, was playing cards with Big John Callahan, son-in-law of the famed General Sanderson, Marine Corps hero who invented dive bombing.

There were others throughout the ready room. Maj Tom Mobley, Captains Bill Cantrell and John "Goldie" Golden, back to war for a second time; Big Jim "Texas" Doolan, twirling his fast growing moustache; Chicago-reared Benny Benziger; Capt Dusty Deal, from down Louisiana way; R.B. Hamilton, from California's L.A. sector; Carroll King, a tiny little flier whose dad is an Army colonel; Minnesota Larry Sowles, Skeeter Webb, who someday will be preaching from a Methodist pulpit; Walter Stonebraker, who was always planning ahead; Capt Donald Owen and his roommate, Capt Percy Avant, two more Guadalcanal veterans who were back again.

Some were reading the latest intelligence. Others were writing carefully worded letters. Still others were clustered about the huge Tokyo flak map on the wall. In one corner a couple of fellows were sleeping. Forgetting it all.

The final briefings were held that afternoon.

A large map of the Tokyo area, carefully sketched by Sergeant Bob Zeller, was stretched across the front of the room. Nearby, the radio war correspondents had set up their gadgets to make a recording of the session.

The intelligence officer gave us the scoop:

"Tomorrow the Marines, first in every big Pacific attack, will be first again in the greatest carrier-borne strike of the war. Your job is a tremendous one and if successfully completed, it might well shorten the war."

Then there was the important technical data. The data about weather, radio frequencies, latest intelligence on the enemy's strength, pointers on recognition, the schedule of strikes, caps, patrols and the rescue facilities in case anyone went down. Targets were pointed out on the map and the routes to and from where discussed.

Southern fried chicken, ice cream and cake were menu features for dinner that night. The pilots took a last look at the huge Tokyo relief map stretched on the wardroom floor. Afterward Chaplain Weed held a Protestant communion service. On the suggestion of the ship's executive officer, we went to bed in our

fighting clothes. It was early evening. It was cold and blankets were needed. We were in the winter zone now.

Everyone ate a hearty, warming breakfast of oranges, ham, eggs, toast and coffee, climbed the ladders to ready rooms and flight decks and waited for the gong sounding general quarters. In the crews' library, Father Smith said Mass. Flight quarters, then general quarters were sounded. In the Marines' ready room, the first flight checked their chart boards, their Mae Wests, and flying gear. Warm air was being pumped into the air conditioning system. It was

**Cigarettes were in
nearly every mouth.
Everyone was talking.
Talking about the little,
seemingly meaningless
things that men
talk about before battle.**



Marine Corps Vought F4U-1D Corsairs of VMF-312 prepare for launch from the U.S. Navy escort carrier USS *Hollandia* (CVE-97) off Okinawa, Japan, in April 1945. (USN photo)

cold and raw outside, and a chilling rain was falling.

The thoughts of the day before were gone now. This was it. This was whatever you liked to call it. This was reality. Stark and naked reality. Face to face. Even the usually cool-thinking majors found their pulses beating a bit faster.

"Is it cold or am I just nervous?" asked Bud Koons.

"I got everything I need," said Don Darfler, "everything but courage."

"Better give me an extra pencil," said

Farmer, "gotta write my autobiography over Tokyo."

Skeeter Webb was puffing away on a big black cigar. He'd be a father someday soon and he'd bought the cigars to pass around. He figured this day was a big event, too, so he opened the box and filled his pockets. His mates figured he might be getting sick and tried to get him to stop smoking the cigar, but he just kept puffing away like a tycoon.

"Glad I got a haircut. Wouldn't want to see the Emperor without a haircut," said Sankey.

"Wait until I tell the boys back home I was over Tokyo," said Huntington.

"I'm glad nothing happened," said Smith. "I wouldn't want to miss this for the world."

Cigarettes were in nearly every mouth.

Everyone was talking. Talking about the little, seemingly meaningless things that men talk about before battle.

"My fingers are all thumbs," said one lad as he fumbled with parachute straps and other gear.

"What's that around your neck?"

Maj Hansen asked George Murray, his wingman.

"That's my wife's yellow silk pajamas. They're my scarf today. And these blue booties on my helmet are for my son David Kim."

"I should've worn something, too," said Hansen.

Others stuffed their wives' and sweethearts' pictures into chart cases.

"Every time I look in here, I'll see her and them Japanese will get hell," one flier explained.

You could feel the ship turning into the wind. The teletype machine, a miniature reproduction of the news tape that moves around *The New York Times* building, lighted up and told us about the wind, ship's speed, point option, target bearing line and other data.

Maj Andre's flight was scheduled first. The first to take off in the entire task force.

"Pilots for the first flight, man your planes!" came the command through the squawk box. Andre and his division got up, squared their shoulders, picked up their chart cases and stomped out through a double line of back-slapping, shouting mates.

"Get 'em! Get the bastards!" they yelled.

Up on the flight deck it was cold. Bitter cold. A sleety, soaking rain lashed the flight deck crew as it pulled and pushed the planes into position. The ship pitched and rolled in the rough sea. Off in the distance the Japanese coast was hiding in a murky, pea-soup mess, it

Dangerously close to the deck's edge, the Sailor was practically being blown overboard until his mate brought him down with a flying tackle. They looked at each other as they lay on the wet deck. The rescued one slapped the other on the back and mumbled thanks then the two climbed to their feet and went back to work.

In the ready room we could hear Andre and his men rev their engines and in a few seconds the Corsairs were off.

The "Padre," broadcasting over

**Hansen had fun though.
As he swept down on one
airfield nearly 100 Japanese
soldiers made for cover
as fast as their legs
could carry them. The
major's .50-calibers sent
them sprawling.**



An illustration of Maj Hansen's attack on the Japanese airfield and the soldiers who were working there.

was even difficult to discern the nearby carriers, battleships and cruisers.

The flight deck crew slipped and slid on the wind-swept deck. None were braver than they that day. It was dark and cold. And there was always the added danger of a whirling propeller. Two youngsters just missed being blown into one prop by neatly and expertly rolling beneath. Another owed his life to a mate who hadn't forgotten the things he learned as a high school footballer.

the ship's loudspeakers to keep the hundreds of men below decks informed, blessed the pilots as they took off and said to his unseen audience:

"The first section of the Tokyo Express is on its way. May God bless them. And may they have good hunting."

Within an hour, Maj Hansen's Marine squadron was launched, and Lieutenant Commander Red Hessel's Navy Hellcat unit followed shortly thereafter. It was 0845 when the chaplain announced that

the Tokyo radio had gone off the air.

A few minutes after 0900 there was a clatter at the door. Andre, King, Bob Hamilton and Sowles were back. All talking at once.

"There it was. A big Betty. Two engines. Big as life. Red meatballs all over the thing. Never even saw us. Sowles and Hamilton hit it first. Then Andre and King. Down it went in flames. Exploded when it hit the water. Yep, never saw us. Those Japanese were plenty sleepy. Never knew what hit them."

It was the first of many incredible stories we were to hear all day long. Our mighty carrier task force had slipped through the Japanese defenses until it was virtually on the Emperor's doorstep. And still the Japanese didn't know it. Their patrols evidently were not even looking for us. All of which suited us perfectly.

Now there were three squadrons of fighters from our carrier on the prowl over Tokyo.

"The Japanese must be catching it now," said the Padre. "Say a prayer for Hansen, Alward and Hessel and their fliers."

Hansen's Corsair was first back. His squadron followed, putting their planes down on the rolling, pitching deck. Everyone safe and sound after the day's first sweep. Murray had a Japanese two-engine fighter Nick to his credit. He had destroyed it by ignoring the old service rule, "Rank has its privileges," and rushing by Maj Hansen to blow the enemy plane apart—before the major's startled gaze.

Hansen had fun though. As he swept down on one airfield nearly 100 Japanese soldiers made for cover as fast as their legs could carry them. The major's .50-calibers sent them sprawling.

"That's for my old buddies at Wake," he said softly.

The squadron had visited three airfields. At each it was the same story. The Japanese were surprised. Hardly fired a shot. The Marines had a field day with their machine guns. Nineteen planes destroyed on the ground, 17 damaged and many buildings.

Maj Alward's flight came aboard just after we had been served our noonday portion of K-rations. Twelve had gone out—nine returned. Two were missing in action. One had been rescued by a destroyer.

A covey of Zekes had jumped Alward



Fire bombing missions carried out by B-29 Superfortress aircraft reduced sections of Tokyo to rubble.

pay a call on Tokyo Rose,” announced the Padre.

Over Tokyo Bay, Alward’s men met the kind of action they wanted. Japanese fighters dove out of the low hanging clouds at the Marines, their guns blazing.

One enemy plane came directly out of the sun, made a pass at the low group and then pulled up toward Alward and his wingman, Archie Clapp. When the Japanese pilot saw the Marines, he pushed over and tried to dive away. Alward overhauled him at 10,000 feet and with a long burst sent him spiraling downward into Tokyo Bay.

Ten minutes later there was more action. Clapp destroyed one Zeke and then severely damaged two more. Later he was to learn that at about that same moment his wife was giving birth to his 8-pound son back in New Orleans, La. Texas Doolan set one enemy plane smoking, while Darfter, Rutledge and Deal got in telling shots on others. That was enough for the Japanese.

On their way back to the carrier, Alward’s group rocketed a Japanese freight locomotive and sent it skyward in a column of searing steam. The Marines flew right through the flying debris. Alward was so low his windshield was splattered with mud.

The day had other big moments, too. Maj Hansen had two special thrills. One was when he got his first glimpse of Tokyo, the other when he destroyed a Japanese fighter.

“Tokyo looked just like any other big city. Our carrier coming out of the fog was the best sight of all,” he said.

Owens’ flight set several hangars afire. Other Marines put plenty of Japanese planes out of commission before the task force began to retire.

As the ships swung about, the sun came out. The murkiness disappeared. Standing on the flight deck you imagined you could almost see the Japanese coast off in the distance.

As we moved away, Maj Hansen turned to Capt Avant.

“Gee! I wish Joe Bauer, Bill Marontate, Nat Clifford, Greg Boyington and the others we lost on Guadalcanal could have seen the Marines flying over Tokyo the last couple of days. It would have done their hearts good.” 🍀

and his flight. It was Alward’s first look at the enemy.

“At 12,000 feet the Japanese plane looked almost like a tiny toy. It made a high side pass at me. I turned and set the Corsair on its tail. I gave him a blip—a good blip—and almost immediately he began to fall apart. The plane crashed and burned about 5 miles offshore.”

George Spierring, who is almost out of sight when he climbs into the cockpit, probably destroyed a Zeke, and Ed Rohricht damaged another.

Andre, with hardly time to munch a couple of sandwiches, was off again at noon—this time Tokyo airfields were his flight’s targets.

Three hours later all were back. Through the mist, our ship flashed the message to the task group commander.

“Ten twin-engine Bettys destroyed on the ground. Three hangars set afire. Others damaged. One enemy plane destroyed in the air.”

Bob Hamilton had destroyed the enemy plane. Four Tojos had been sighted climbing through the clouds in single-file Indian fashion. Hamilton zoomed up to intercept them. He opened fire on one from a good distance and continued pumping bullets into the plane until he was within 50 yards of it. Pieces began to fly from the engine cockpit, the wing root and the fuselage from the very start of Hamilton’s run. Soon it was enveloped in flames and

going straight down. Huntington, Sankey and Erickson had damaged other Tojos.

Just before darkness wrapped itself about us, Alward’s group returned from the second mission. Their rockets had shot up plenty of grounded aircraft. Maj Al had shown his personal dislike of the Japanese in a very personal way. Sweeping down until he was only 15 feet off the deck at one airfield, he raced along with six guns blazing for nearly one-half mile—virtually blowing a Japanese twin-boom fighter apart. On the way back he strafed a destroyer escort and set it afire.

We had K-rations again. Everyone talked about the absence of Japanese fighter interception.

“I just can’t understand those Japanese,” said one pilot. “Imagine us back in Kansas City under attack by the Japanese. Why, we’d even send up sewing machines with guns on.”

Then most everyone turned in. It was early. In the ready rooms the intelligence officers worked through the night. There were new targets, new briefings.

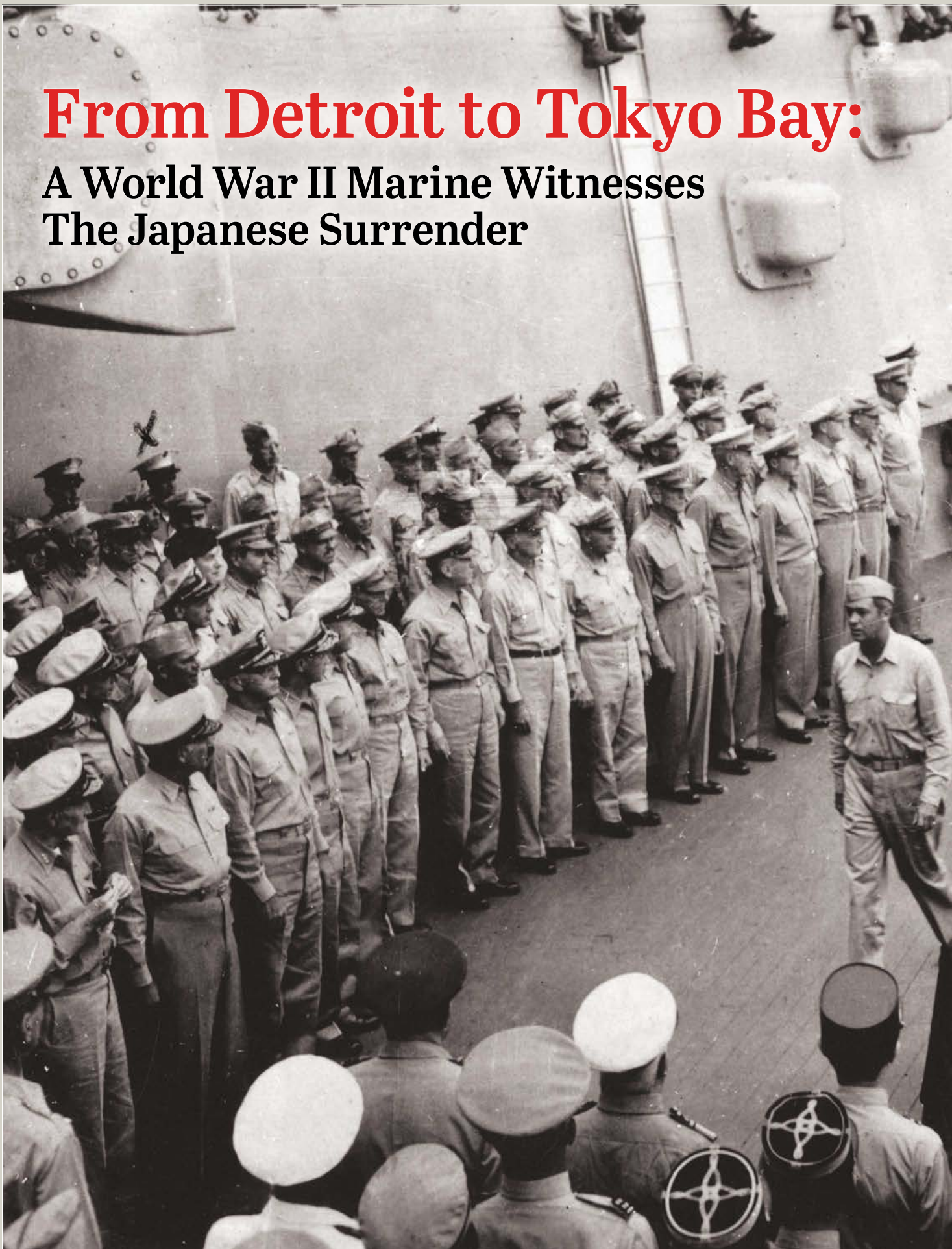
The weather wasn’t any better the next morning. If possible, it was worse. Visibility was measured by yards around the task force, but it was clear and sunny over Tokyo.

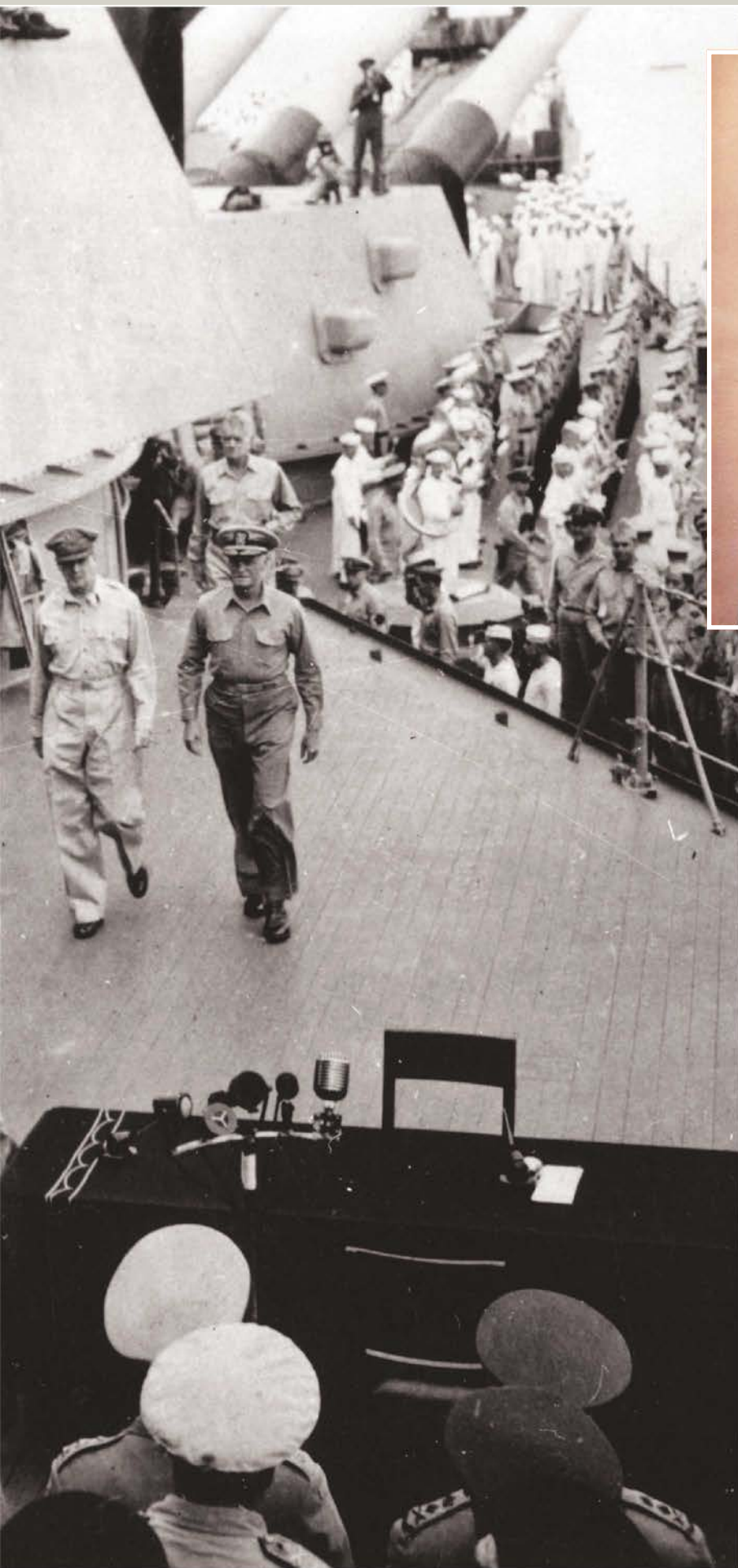
For the Marines, Alward, last in the night before, was first to be launched.

“There go those Marines again—to

From Detroit to Tokyo Bay:

A World War II Marine Witnesses The Japanese Surrender





COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER N. BLAKER

Eugene E. Parker Jr. (above) witnessed the official Japanese surrender ceremony on board USS *Missouri* (BB-63) in Tokyo Bay, on Sept. 2, 1945. Arriving on *Missouri's* quarterdeck (right) for the ceremony are GEN Douglas MacArthur, ADM Chester W. Nimitz and ADM William F. Halsey. Cpl Eugene Parker is in the back row, as he later indicated by placing the small "x" above his head on his copy of the photograph.

By Christopher N. Blaker

On Sept. 2, 1945, the final day of World War II, very few Marines were present in the crowd that gathered on the quarterdeck of the battleship USS *Missouri* (BB-63) when the official Japanese instrument of surrender was signed in Tokyo Bay. One of those lucky few was my grandfather, Corporal Eugene E. Parker Jr. of Detroit, Mich. who was serving as orderly to Admiral William F. Halsey Jr., commander of the U.S. Third Fleet.

Parker, then 25 years old and a near-four-year veteran of the Marine Corps, appeared in many official and unofficial photographs of the surrender ceremony helping to cement in history the role of Marines serving aboard Navy warships during World War II and the presence of Marines during the conflict's final chapter.

Though my grandfather died before I was born, I grew up hearing stories about his service in the Pacific and his presence at the Japanese surrender. Tales of his combat experiences were peppered with

COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER N. BLAKER



the names of places such as Midway, Guadalcanal, Leyte, and Okinawa, all of which quickly became immortalized in my memory. My mother had held onto her father's olive green wool service uniform, adorned with five service ribbons and 11 battle stars. My family kept a box of my grandfather's war memorabilia that included autographed portraits of legendary naval commanders and correspondence from Admiral William "Bill" Halsey himself.

Coming from a Marine Corps family deeply proud of its heritage, my grandfather's role in such a significant chapter

in history was a big deal indeed. When I began training as a military historian a decade ago, his story was never far from my mind. Eugene Parker was a wartime enlistee. He had volunteered to serve only for the duration of hostilities, enlisting five weeks after Pearl Harbor and accepting an honorable discharge nine weeks after the Japanese surrender. How was it that a young man from Depression-era Detroit with little formal education and no prior military experience found himself at the center of what is today remembered as one of the most monumental moments of the 20th century?

Entering the Pacific War

Eugene E. Parker Jr. was born on Oct. 24, 1919, in Detroit, the sixth of 11 children raised in a poor family of Irish and English Americans. He came of age during the difficult Depression years, which instilled in him a great deal of independence and a strong sense of pride. By the age of 16, he had left school and secured a full-time job as a grocery store clerk at Fox Creek Market on the east side of Detroit.

On Dec. 7, 1941, 22-year-old Parker was working at Fox Creek Market when he learned that the Japanese Imperial Navy had attacked the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl



COURTESY OF NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

Left: Parker was assigned to the aircraft carrier *Hornet* (CV-8) during the Battle of Midway and the Guadalcanal campaign.

Harbor, and his country was going to war. He made up his mind almost immediately that he was going to join the Marine Corps—the only branch of service he and his buddies considered worth its salt.

Within five weeks of the U.S. declaration of war, he was in uniform. After completing recruit training in San Diego, Parker was selected to attend a specialized sea school program to become a seagoing Marine, fulfilling the oldest and most traditional role of the Corps. While many of his contemporaries would go on to serve as assault troops during the island-hopping campaigns of the Pacific, Parker was trained as an antiaircraft gunner aboard ship and sent to Pearl Harbor in April 1942 to join the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Parker served at Pearl while awaiting orders to join a Marine ship detachment. When Vice Admiral Bill Halsey's Task Force 16, which included the aircraft carriers USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) and USS *Hornet* (CV-8) and their escorts, returned to Hawaii after launching the famed Doolittle Raid over Tokyo, USS *Hornet* requested four enlisted leathernecks to augment its Marine detachment. Parker was issued the coveted assignment, reporting aboard the renowned flattop on May 27 and joining the Marine gun crew of one of the vessel's 1.1-inch antiaircraft cannons.

The next day, Task Force 16 pulled out of Pearl Harbor to ambush the Japanese fleet at Midway. During the ensuing battle, airplanes of the U.S. carriers USS *Yorktown* (CV-5), USS *Enterprise* and USS *Hornet* sank four enemy flattops and

a cruiser at the cost of just *Yorktown* and a destroyer. Though *Hornet* itself was not attacked by Japanese aircraft during the battle, an incident of accidental friendly fire on the carrier's flight deck killed several Marines in Parker's detachment and nearly made him a casualty, too.

The Battle of Midway proved a significant U.S. victory in the Pacific War with Japan. With less than two weeks' experience aboard ship, Parker had become a combat veteran of one of the most famous battles of World War II.

Tales From the South Pacific

The summer of 1942 saw the Allies go on the offensive in the Pacific. In August, the 1st Marine Division landed at Guadalcanal and Tulagi in the Solomon Islands, kicking off a string of island assaults in the South Pacific. The Guadalcanal campaign would be remembered as one of the bitterest campaigns in American military history—and USS *Hornet* was to play a major role.

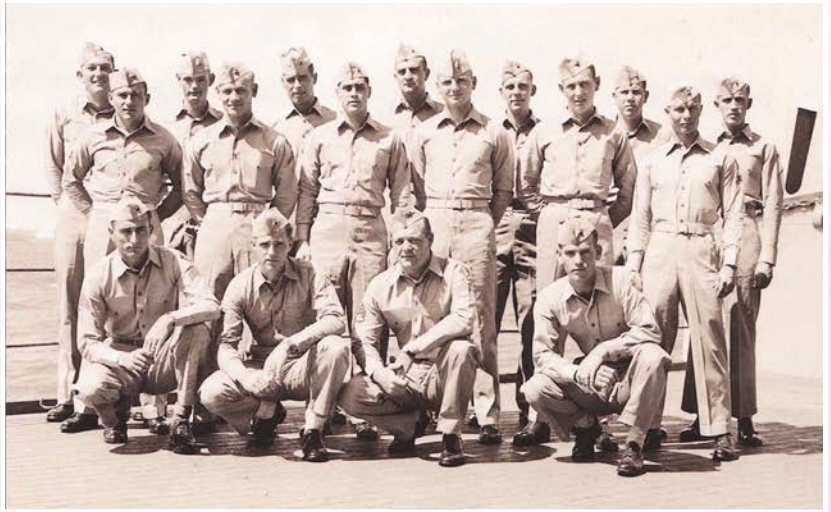
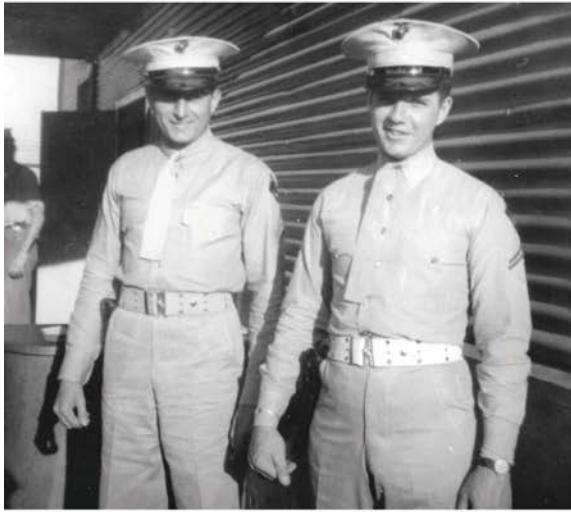
Between August and October, *Hornet* operated in the Lower Solomons alongside USS *Saratoga* (CV-3), USS *Wasp* (CV-7), and *Enterprise* carrier groups, supporting the Marines on Guadalcanal and engaging elements of the Japanese fleet wherever they appeared. *Hornet* frequently sailed alone through the dangerous area of the Solomons known as "The Slot," especially as the Japanese scored hit after hit on the other U.S. carriers and disabled or sank them one by one. It was a draining campaign as even *Hornet* met its tragic end during the October 1942 Battle of the



To
Corporal Eugene E. Parker, Jr. - U.S.M.C.
In gratitude for his care & thought of
me during five months of very strenuous
combat operations.
W.F. Halsey -
Admiral - U.S. Navy.

COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER N. BLAKER

Parker saved an autographed portrait of ADM William F. Halsey Jr., that was given to him when he served as the admiral's orderly. Parker also kept this note from ADM Halsey that was written after their first tour together at sea in the Western Pacific.



COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER N. BLAKER

Above left: Cpl Parker, right, and Sgt Willie Phillips on duty aboard USS *New Jersey* (BB-62) in late 1944. (Photo courtesy of Christopher N. Blaker)

Above right: Parker and his fellow Marine orderlies on board USS *Missouri* (BB-63) during their second tour at sea in the summer of 1945. Parker is in the first row, second from the left.

Santa Cruz Islands. Parker and his crewmates were subjected to the horror of successive all-out Japanese aerial strikes during which *Hornet* was struck by three bombs, two torpedoes and two suicide planes. Everywhere throughout the ship, there was chaos—fires raged, compartments flooded, men lay dead and wounded and planes and munitions exploded. The carrier's 85-man Marine detachment suffered 14 killed and 28 wounded, a shocking 49 percent casualty rate.

Miraculously, Parker survived with only minor injuries. When *Hornet* was ordered abandoned, he went over the side and into the Solomon Sea, avoiding circling sharks and enemy bombs alike for roughly an hour before being rescued by the escorting destroyer USS *Mustin* (DDG-89). *Hornet* may have sunk beneath the waves at Santa Cruz, but the Marine from Detroit was still very much alive, which meant his war was far from over.

The surviving Marines of *Hornet* returned to San Diego in December to serve as guards and be retrained as infantrymen to participate in upcoming island assaults at Tarawa, Bougainville or New Britain. In the fall of 1943, Parker, now a trained antitank gunner, redeployed to the South Pacific as an individual infantry replacement.

When Parker arrived at New Caledonia, Noumea, to be assigned to an active infantry regiment, fate intervened. ADM Halsey, commanding the theater, was in search of several additional Marines to join his headquarters. By little more than luck alone, Parker and 11 other men were singled out from their battalion of

more than 1,800 and ordered to remain at Noumea while their fellow Marines joined infantry outfits bound for battle.

Parker joined Halsey's South Pacific headquarters at Noumea in October 1943. He would not separate from the admiral's command for more than two years. After the Allies neutralized the Japanese bastion at Rabaul on New Britain, achieving the chief objective of the Solomon Islands campaign, new questions arose: with the war moving out of the South Pacific, what was to be done with ADM Halsey, and what would become of the men serving under him?

Western Pacific Drive

The answer soon became clear. In June 1944, Halsey was given command of the U.S. Third Fleet, the predominant striking force of the U.S. Pacific Fleet. He would alternate command with Admiral Raymond A. Spruance, under whom the fleet was called the U.S. Fifth Fleet. When amassing his flag allowance, 14 enlisted leathernecks from his existing 114-man Marine detachment in the South Pacific were requested to serve as orderlies aboard the flagship. Incredibly, Parker was among those selected, and so he bid farewell to Noumea and prepared to return to sea for the first time in nearly two years.

Halsey and his flag allowance boarded their new flagship, the battleship USS *New Jersey* (BB-62), at Pearl Harbor in August 1944 and met the enormous Third Fleet near the Admiralty Islands in the Bismarck Sea. Parker, now a corporal, set to work serving as orderly to Halsey, Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Robert B. "Mick"



Carney, and other ranking staff officers.

The Third Fleet's first order of business was to support General Douglas MacArthur's campaign to invade and liberate the Philippines. In October 1944, Allied troops landed at Leyte, kicking off the biggest and bloodiest campaign in the Southwest Pacific. Though U.S. leaders did not believe the enemy would contest the landings, the Japanese Imperial Navy decided to risk battle at Leyte Gulf, setting

ADM Halsey, center, and his flag allowance on board USS *New Jersey* (BB-62) in January 1945. Parker is standing in the sixth row, fourth Marine from the left.



COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER N. BLAKER

the stage for the largest naval contest of World War II.

The October 1944 Battle of Leyte Gulf saw the Japanese navy gamble its remaining ships against the U.S. Third and Seventh Fleets in Philippine waters. The enemy employed several clever surprises, deceiving Halsey into leading his entire Third Fleet north after a decoy carrier force and catching an unaware Seventh Fleet U.S. escort carrier-destroyer group

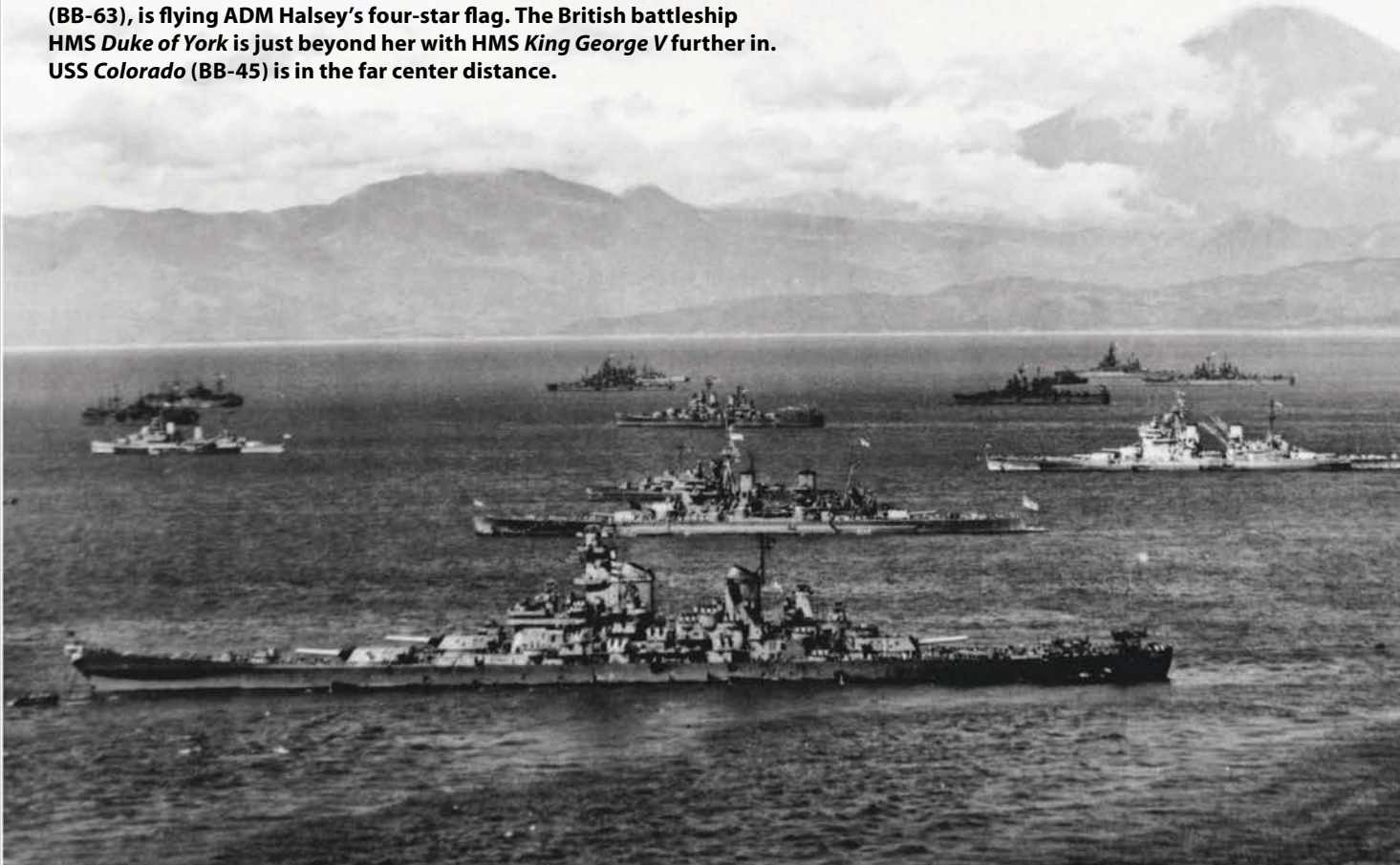
defending the landing area off Samar, risking the success of the entire Allied invasion.

Parker was on *New Jersey's* flag bridge when the now-famous dispatch from Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commanding the U.S. Pacific Fleet, was delivered to Halsey: "Where is Task Force 34? The World Wonders." The last phrase had been added to confuse enemy decoders but had not been removed on *New Jersey*,

and Halsey saw it as a rebuke from his boss. Enraged, he threw his hat onto the deck and began swearing and storming about the bridge, stopping only when Carney intervened and demanded that he pull himself together.

Fortunately, Allied naval forces managed to turn back the Japanese fleet, and MacArthur's campaign to liberate the Philippines continued in earnest. But while the Battle of Leyte Gulf ended in

American and British ships in Sagami Wan, Aug. 28, 1945, preparing for the formal Japanese surrender which took place a few days later. Mount Fuji is visible in the background. The nearest ship, USS *Missouri* (BB-63), is flying ADM Halsey's four-star flag. The British battleship HMS *Duke of York* is just beyond her with HMS *King George V* further in. USS *Colorado* (BB-45) is in the far center distance.



COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER N. BLAKER

The Japanese delegation arrives on the quarterdeck of USS *Missouri* (BB-63), in Tokyo Bay to sign the official instrument of surrender in September 1945. Parker is in the back row, left side, as he later indicated on his copy of the photograph by placing the small "x" above his head.



USN

an overwhelming victory for the Allies, Halsey's reputation as an infallible naval commander was dampened considerably, and the mighty USS *New Jersey*, on which Parker and the rest of the Third Fleet's flag allowance sailed, had not fired a single shot.

The Japanese had been defeated at Leyte Gulf, but the Third Fleet wasn't out of the woods. During the following weeks, the fleet was subjected to two new dangers—Japanese kamikaze planes aiming to sink Allied ships one by one and a tropical typhoon that proved more menacing than any enemy surface action could. When ADM Halsey turned over command of the fleet to Spruance in January 1945, Parker and the rest of the Third Fleet flag allowance were elated to return to the United States for a well-deserved period of rest and recuperation.

Anchoring in Tokyo Bay

That period of rest passed quickly. After visiting Detroit on furlough, Parker returned to sea in May 1945 onboard the

Third Fleet's new flagship, the battleship USS *Missouri* (BB-63). Halsey took command of the fleet from Spruance during the final stages of the Okinawa campaign, the naval battle that had become the most costly sea operation of the entire war. After the Third Fleet fought off Japanese kamikazes for several weeks and rode out another tropical storm, Okinawa was finally declared secure in June. The Allies then turned their attention to the one target left of the Pacific War—the Japanese home islands themselves.

The campaign to invade Japan, code-named Operation Downfall, was expected to be the bloodiest of World War II, with projected Allied casualties of more than a million. To soften the islands up for assault, the Third Fleet conducted countless airstrikes and naval bombardments on Japan that summer. It was abundantly clear by mid-1945 that the Japanese could not hope to defeat the Allies and win the war, but they were prepared to die trying, and they were determined to take as many Allied lives with them as they could.

To the great relief of Parker and every other soldier, Sailor, airman and Marine, the invasion of Japan never materialized. After two atomic bombs were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet Union entered the Pacific War in early August, the Japanese finally offered their unconditional surrender. Three years, eight months, and 20 days after the Imperial Japanese Navy attacked the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor and drew the United States into World War II, the Third Fleet entered Tokyo Bay to formally accept the surrender of Japan.

The surrender ceremony took place on the quarterdeck of *Missouri* on the morning of Sept. 2, 1945. Sailors, Marines, newspaper reporters and photographers crowded the upper decks to get a good look at the many famous Allied military commanders invited aboard the battleship as guests of honor. Senior U.S. officers of all services also gathered on the quarterdeck to observe the proceedings. In their ranks were fewer than two dozen Marines who had received the honor of attending the event. Parker was among them, standing several rows behind Halsey and armed with a pistol in case the Japanese tried anything treacherous.

Fortunately, the ceremony proceeded without incident, and Parker observed a peaceful transition from a time of war to a time of peace. After Allied and Japanese representatives signed the instrument of surrender, it was finished. World War II, for which Parker had given almost four years of his life and during which he had nearly been killed numerous times, was finally over.

Cpl. Eugene E. Parker, Jr., USMC, spent a 30-day furlough with his sister, Mrs. R. G. Brisley, of 1086 Manistique. He recently returned to his duties as orderly to Admiral Halsey, Commander of the Third Fleet.

Before his entrance into service, he was employed at the Fox Creek Market.

His brother, Pvt. George M. Parker, of the Fifth Marine Division was wounded during the battle of Iwo Jima. He is receiving medical attention at a U.S. Navy Base Hospital overseas.

COURTESY OF CHRISTOPHER N. BLAKER

In 1945, a newspaper in the Detroit, Mich., area spelled out the wartime exploits of Parker and his brother George, also a Marine.

When the U.S. military began demobilizing, Parker was honorably discharged from the Marine Corps in November 1945, and he returned to Detroit with plans to begin a career and start a family. He worked as a security patrolman at the Chrysler Corporation for 34 years and lived in metropolitan Detroit for much of the rest of his life, passing away on Aug. 12, 1981.

Looking back on my grandfather's service record and exploits during the Pacific War, it is impressive to imagine that one Marine could have seen and experienced so much in just four short years. What is even more remarkable is that Eugene Parker was not a special exception. He was just one of the 16 million Americans who answered their country's call to duty during World War II and helped protect it in its hour of need.

Author's bio: Christopher N. Blaker is a historian and editor who works for Marine Corps University Press in Quantico, Va. A native of Michigan, he now resides in metropolitan Washington, D.C., where he recently completed a book about his grandfather's experiences in the Marine Corps during World War II.



We—the Marines

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

With Annual PFT Canceled, Marines Find Ways to Stay Fit

On June 18, more than 20 servicemembers assigned to Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., participated in a High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT) challenge at Butler Stadium, proving their dedication to upholding the high standards of the Marine Corps despite recent policy changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On April 21, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General David H. Berger, canceled the yearly physical fitness test (PFT) due to the inability to maintain proper social distancing during some portions of the test.

In addition to this announcement, Gen Berger said, “Our fitness to fight remains a priority, and I expect each of us to continue to maintain our fighting condition.”

Quantico-based Marines and other servicemembers showcased their ability to live up to the Commandant’s request during the June HITT competition, which

consisted of five separate strength or conditioning events. These events included the broad jump, max-repetition deadlifts, burpees, a pro-agility course and a 300-yard shuffle.

“The HITT competition gave us an opportunity to come together with a group of Marines after being apart due to COVID,” said Lieutenant Colonel Robin Walther, director of the Marine Corps Installations National Capital Region Regional Contracting Office. “I enjoyed the camaraderie and the competition.”

While many enjoyed competing, they also kept in mind that training such as HITT, which helps to enhance operational fitness and optimize combat readiness and resilience, is of paramount importance to the Navy and Marine Corps team—America’s “expeditionary force in readiness.”

“For a Marine, fitness is at the base of everything we do,” said Walther. “I need to be able to do my job anywhere in the world, so I need to maintain my fitness. I told my Marines that even though the

PFT was canceled, we need to take this time to continue to improve.”

Participating in the HITT competition showed the commanding officer of MCB Quantico, Colonel William C. Bentley III, who also took part in the event, that Marines, Sailors and soldiers on the installation are taking the Commandant’s message about staying fit seriously.

“We never get the chance to pick the next crisis; where it happens, when it happens,” said Gen Berger in his announcement. “We respond immediately, so we must continue to train.”

Sgt Kirstin Spanu, USMC

Makerspace Marines Awarded For COVID-19 Support

The 2nd Marine Logistics Group Makerspace led the way in innovation during the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. Two Marines from Makerspace were recognized for their efforts and dedication to duty during this time.

Corporal Michael Espinosa and Lance



Sgt Eduardo Caballero, an administrative clerk with Headquarters and Service Bn, participates in the pro-agility event during the HITT competition at Butler Stadium aboard MCB Quantico, Va., June 18. The competition allowed servicemembers to showcase their fitness despite the cancellation of the annual PFT.



LCPL ZACHARY ZEPHIR, USMC

Cpl Michael Espinosa receives the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., May 29, for his contributions designing and producing PPE during the critical shortage of masks at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Corporal Paul Dovo were awarded Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals for their contribution during COVID-19 response operations at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., May 29.

The Marines were directly responsible for rapidly 3D printing personal protective equipment (PPE) to be sent to aid the Federal Emergency Management Agency Region 8, Naval Medical Center Camp Lejeune and 2nd Medical Battalion for COVID-19 screenings. They worked in 12-hour shifts, constantly adapting to design and produce PPE during the nation's critical shortage.

"Espinosa and Dovo are both the poster children for this new kind of Marines and critical players in the making," said Captain Matt Audette with Marine Forces Systems Command. "They are punching way above their weight class on their ability to both grasp and teach these new concepts and turn their outside-the-box thinking into real solutions."

Makerspace is a collaborative environment for Marines and Sailors to cultivate an innovative culture to explore new ideas to improve policies, procedures or products to reduce maintenance costs, increase equipment readiness and improve combat effectiveness.

"It has been such a great experience being able to learn so much in the time that I've been here," said Espinosa. "I can proudly say that I've made a difference in peoples' lives."

LCpl Zachary Zephir, USMC



LCPL ZACHARY ZEPHIR, USMC

LCpl Paul Dovo, assigned to Makerspace, 2nd MLG, salutes after receiving the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., on May 29, for his innovative work creating 3D-printed PPE.

Marine Recruiters, Poolees, Lend a Helping Hand at LA Dream Center

Marines and poolees from Recruiting Substation Burbank, Recruiting Station Los Angeles, were invited to join the Justin and Kourtney Turner Food Bank at the Dream Center Foundation in Los Angeles, Calif., to lend a helping hand to their local community.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, Los Angeles County has seen a higher volume of confirmed cases than its

surrounding counties. Joined by other volunteer organizations, the RSS Burbank Marines sorted and separated food into 200 boxes, which will be distributed to hundreds of people.

According to poolee Joshua Suarez, small acts of kindness go a long way in these particularly challenging times.

"With everything that's been going on, I believe you can do a lot with just simple acts and helping out someone," said Suarez. "We often ask ourselves, 'What



SGT EMILY KIRK, USMC

Marine recruiters and poolees with RSS Burbank, RS Los Angeles, prepare and sort donated food while volunteering at the Justin and Kourtney Turner Food Bank in Los Angeles, Calif., June 20.

can I do?’ or ‘How can I help out?’ and this is a way I can.”

The poolees of RSS Burbank are from the surrounding cities, so this project was personal to them because it directly impacted their immediate community.

“This one was actually kind of personal to me because the Dream Center is in Echo Park and my whole mom’s side of the family is from there,” said Rafael Munguia, a poolee who participated in the volunteer opportunity. “I know a lot of people from Echo Park and it meant a lot to me personally to know that we were doing something directly to help out that community.”

Being a Marine is about more than just wearing a uniform—it’s about giving back to the community. Volunteering prior to active-duty service allows these young men and women to see what it is like to be a part of a cause bigger than themselves and helps them focus on the greater good of their communities.

According to Munguia, RSS Burbank has done a handful of volunteer events since he has been a part of the Delayed Entry Program. The DEP provides young men and women with the opportunity to enlist in the Marines, even though they might not go to recruit training for up to a year. The DEP poolees have weekly meetings with their recruiters to ensure they are continuously making strides to prepare for recruit training.

RS Los Angeles’ area of responsibility includes more than 15 substations spread throughout 22,000 square miles of Southern California.

The RSS Burbank office often provides volunteers at events in their local area and surrounding schools. The team plans on returning monthly to the Dream Center Foundation to provide any support needed.

Sgt Emily Kirk, USMC

First Female To Graduate Grueling Scout Swimmer Course

A Marine made history when she graduated the Scout Swimmer Course, a highly demanding course designed to teach Marines specialized amphibious skills.

Sergeant Alyssa Triplett, a radio operator with Expeditionary Warfare Training Group, Pacific, based at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado, Calif., graduated the course May 15, officially becoming the first female to successfully complete the three-week course designed to make Marines capable of conducting boat raids.

Triplett said that being a female in the course presented a unique challenge.

“It was definitely intimidating being the only girl at first, but I had a lot of support from my command,” she said.

Triplett, who also serves as a Marine Corps Instructor Trainer of Water Survival, had already done extensive water survival and instructor training in the Marine Corps. She said that though the course was challenging, she saw it as just part of being a Marine.

“I like the fact that other people are inspired by the fact that I went through,” she said. “I feel like as a Marine it’s just something you do, so it didn’t really seem like that big of a deal.”

The course trains personnel in the skills necessary to plan and execute beach and urban swimmer reconnaissance in support of small boat operations. The curriculum consists of instruction in dangerous marine life, scout swimmer equipment, surf observations and reports, mission planning, and beach and urban scout swimmer techniques. Extensive practical application is conducted at different sites throughout the local area.

“There was never one time when I was like, ‘Wow, this is easy,’ ” said Triplett. “I really think it’s just a mental thing [...] if

something starts to hurt, you kind of just have to readjust what you’re doing and just don’t give up [...] I just didn’t give up, just tried my hardest the whole time.”

LCpl Christy Yost, USMC

Picnic Turned Rescue Mission: Marines Save Family On Potomac River

Four Marines from Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., saved the lives of a father and son on the Potomac River in Nanjemoy, Md., June 14.

Before heading out on the boat for a picnic that day, Corporal Quinn J. Hurt, a photographer with MCB Quantico’s Communication Strategy (COMMSTRAT) and Operations section, went over safety procedures with the rest of the Marines.

“Whenever I take anyone out on the boat, I always give a basic safety brief, which people usually make fun of me for. But in this case, it definitely paid off,” said Hurt. “I tell them where the life jackets are, I tell them what we’re going to do in the worst case scenario, and I also instruct the basics of operating a water vessel, so if something were to happen to me they would be able to put it in gear and get out of the situation.”

When the Marines arrived at their desired destination, they noticed there was only one other boat nearby, which had a family onboard.

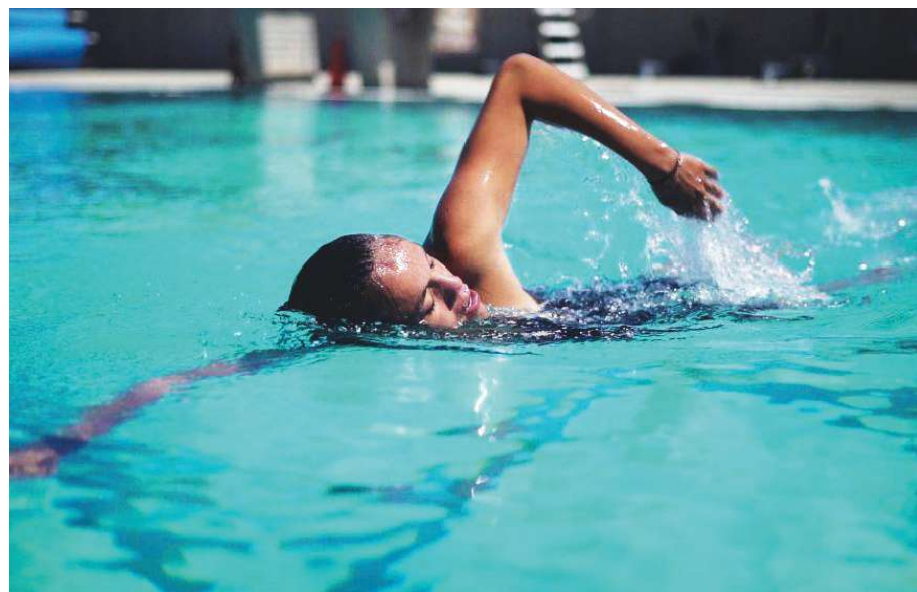
“They were jumping off the boat and screaming, having what looked to be a fun time,” said Cpl Andrea Rosembert, an administrative specialist with Officer Candidates School’s Installation Personnel Admin Center. “We took a second glance and noticed the situation was actually pretty serious. The people on the other boat were flailing their arms and shouting ‘hey!’ and ‘help!’ ”

Hurt said they quickly moved their boat closer to the family’s, being careful not to make any large waves that could further endanger the father and son struggling to stay afloat in the water. He donned a life jacket, jumped off the boat and began to make his way toward the two individuals.

“I swam up to them, and clearly they were having issues swimming,” acknowledged Hurt. “The father’s head was bobbing underwater and he had a younger son who was holding onto him as tight as he could.”

Hurt introduced himself to the pair, instructed them to stay calm, and told

Sgt Alyssa Triplett swims in the pool after a Marine Corps Instructor Trainer Water Survival class at MCAS Miramar, Calif., June 16. Triplett was the first female Marine in Marine Corps history to complete the Scout Swimmer Course.



LCPL CHRISTY YOST, USMC



SGT KIRSTIN SPANU, USMC

From the left, Cpl Webster Rison, Cpl Andrew Rosembert, Cpl Kayde Becerra and Cpl Quinn J. Hurt, Marines stationed at Quantico, Va., stand in front of the boat they used to help rescue a father and son on the Potomac River, June 14. The Marines attributed their success in saving the two individuals from drowning to training they received in the Corps.

Once they reached the father and son, Rosembert and Becerra pulled everyone onboard, to include another son who was in the water but was not struggling—nor was he able to help.

All four Marines noted how smoothly the rescue went.

“We were all calm and collected,” said Hurt. “I would attribute it to the stresses the Marine Corps puts on you, where it forces you to remain calm under pressure.”

Hurt said participating in the Corps’ advanced water survival training, which involves learning rescue techniques, as well as the Marine Corps’ emphasis on planning, also aided in saving the two individuals that day.

Sgt Kirstin Spanu, USMC



them he was there to help. He then positioned his body underneath the father and son to keep both of their heads above water as he used his legs to bring them toward the boat.

As this was happening, Cpl Webster Rison, a graphic artist assigned to COMMSTRAT, also jumped in the water with the intention of bringing life jackets

to the father and son, but the other Marines reached them first with their boat.

“Hurt has been teaching me how to pick up wakeboarders after they fall,” said Cpl Kayde Becerra, an administrative specialist with The Basic School’s Installation Personnel Admin Center. “And so, I thought to myself, ‘Why can’t we pick them up as if they were wakeboarders?’”

Crazy Caption Contest

Winner



CPL ISAAC CANTRELL, USMC

“Saddle up! Our Uber ride is here!”

Submitted by:
Cpl Steve Centore, USMC (Ret)
Lowell, Mass.

This Month’s Photo



AMY FORSYTHE

(Caption) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ ZIP _____

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

BUILDING A BRIDGE:

Founded by Marine Veteran-Turned-Actor, Arts in the Armed Forces Seeks to Unite Military, Theater Communities



COURTESY OF ANTON SATTLER



COURTESY OF ANTON SATTLER

Marine veteran Anton Sattler, playwright of “Local Gods,” is the recipient of AITAF’s 2020 Bridge Award. The former infantry officer, pictured in the right photo prior to a mission with 3/7 in Ramadi, Iraq, in 2005, drew from his life experiences, including those from his time in the Corps, as he wrote his award-winning work.

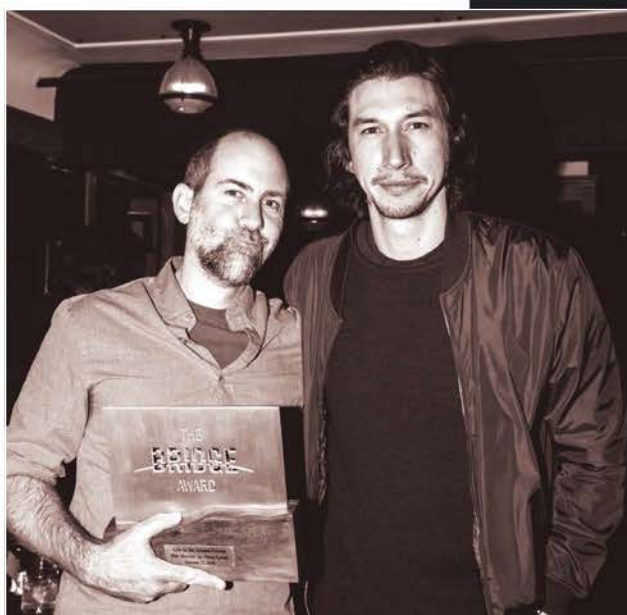
By Sara W. Bock

Marine veteran Anton Sattler enjoyed writing, but he never considered writing a play—that is, not until the opportunity presented itself in 2018, when nonprofit organization Arts in the Armed Forces (AITAF) announced it was accepting submissions for its inaugural Bridge Award. The winner of the award, which recognizes an emerging playwright who is either an active-duty or veteran servicemember, receives a \$10,000 cash prize and an AITAF-produced public reading of their winning work.

With a nudge from his wife, Jackie, who strongly encouraged him to take a shot at it, Sattler, a former infantry officer who resides in New York City, began typing away.

Sattler’s first entry, a play called “The Borough,” didn’t earn him the prize—that honor went to U.S. Army veteran and first-time playwright Vinnie Lyman for his submission “War Stories”—but the experience of writing and receiving constructive feedback from a panel of esteemed professional playwrights, directors and designers sparked something within Sattler, who had studied

fiction writing and film at the University of Pittsburgh as an undergraduate prior to accepting a commission in the Marine Corps. A year after trying for the first Bridge Award, Sattler began working on a draft for a new play, “Local Gods,” which he submitted in 2019, earning himself a spot among the top five finalists.



JENN EMERLING

Left: Actor, Marine veteran and AITAF co-founder Adam Driver, right, congratulates the first-ever Bridge Award winner, U.S. Army veteran Vinnie Lyman, left, on his play “War Stories” in 2018.



This year, the third time proved to be the charm for the tenacious writer, who, armed with the feedback on “Local Gods” he received from the judges, started a second draft of the same play. In May, “Local Gods” was announced as the winning work, selected by a panel of industry professionals led by head judge and renowned American playwright David Henry Hwang, earning Sattler the 2020 Bridge Award.

For Sattler, who had stopped pursuing creative work during his time in the Corps, it speaks volumes that AITAF has provided a forum that not only motivates veterans to write down their stories but also provides them with a group of industry leaders who want to read their work and are willing to provide feedback on it.

“The core ideas and emotional battles in ‘Local Gods’ were in my head and my heart for a long time,” said Sattler. “I don’t know that they would have ever become a play without AITAF leaving an open door that said, ‘Come inside, we want to hear what you have to say.’ ”

That sort of invitation is precisely what Erica Newhouse, an actor who also works as a program director for AITAF, had in mind when she conceived the idea for the award.

“I just thought that this award could not only acknowledge a great piece of writing, but also inspire people to write their stories,” said Newhouse, adding that the award seemed like a natural extension of AITAF’s mission. “What we do primarily is bring play readings to military

Driver and fellow actor Michael Shannon perform a scene from “True West” by American playwright Sam Shepard during AITAF’s 10th anniversary celebration at American Airlines Theatre in New York City in November 2018. The primary mission of AITAF is to bring “stripped down” versions of American plays to military audiences, eliminating costumes, lighting and sets in order to focus on the power of language. (Photo by Jenn Emerling)

bases around the world. And they’re stripped down—they’re just readings of contemporary American plays. For us, language is the most important part of the event [...] So I thought, how can we use that core value of great language? [...] Our

From the left, Adam Driver and actors Dylan Baker and Tsebiyah Derry answer questions from the audience following a November 2019 AITAF performance of “A Raisin in the Sun” at their annual Veterans Day event in New York City. (Photo by Jenn Emerling)

direction is the arts going to the military, and how can we bring the military into the arts?”

AITAF succeeded in doing just that by creating the award, which garnered more than 200 submissions in the competition’s first year alone.

Sattler’s “Local Gods” tells the story of a female Army veteran who struggles to re-adapt to civilian life as she attempts to reconcile her conscience and deal with inner moral conflict. “This play is a keenly observed, poignant portrait of the losses we suffer when we go to war, and the losses we suffer when we come back,” reads a synopsis from AITAF.

And while the events in the play are fictitious, Sattler says they’re based on a mix of his own experiences and observations both in and out of the military and are drawn from the “emotional truths” that come from serving, deploying, coming home and adapting to life after the military.

“I think no matter what the series of events are for anybody, I think there are a lot of universal things that somebody goes through whenever they’ve had those experiences that I think most people in the military would share or that they would relate to,” said Sattler, who led Marines in combat during two tours in Iraq with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment before leaving active duty in 2008. He continued to serve in the Marine Corps Reserve as a public affairs officer in New



York City until 2015 and in the meantime, produced the critically acclaimed Korean War documentary “Chosin” with fellow Marine veteran Brian Iglesias, which was released in 2010. He’s since earned his MBA using the GI Bill and has worked in operations and strategy for tech and media companies in New York.

As a first-time playwright with no formal training in the field, Sattler has spent countless hours reading and researching the format over the past few years. Typically, said Newhouse, winners of other notable playwriting awards have checked all the boxes for a very specific career progression starting with master’s degree playwriting programs that have “groomed

them” for the industry and provided them valuable networking opportunities. What sets the Bridge Award apart is that it allows a space for members of the military community—most of whom have not taken that traditional path—to connect with the theater community. That connection creates a “bridge” between the two groups, whose members often have “a lot of feelings about each other but not a lot of firsthand understanding,” said Newhouse.

For Sattler, the experience of writing “Local Gods” was about more than just winning a prize; in many ways, it was therapeutic.

“I transitioned to civilian life long before I wrote my first play, but in a way, that transition never ends,” said Sattler. “Writing has helped me put on paper a lot of thoughts and ideas and feelings that seemed impossible to convey in a conversation with a veteran or a civilian, or maybe I just wasn’t ready to have those conversations. But I could let them out by having discussions with myself and



Cadets from the United States Military Academy enjoy AITAF’s performance of “True West” at American Airlines Theatre in New York City, in November 2018.

JENN EMERLING

my characters. And for me, that was just as good.”

The complex thoughts and feelings that military servicemembers often experience during their transition to civilian life are exactly what led Marine veteran and actor Adam Driver of “Star Wars” fame to start AITAF in 2008 alongside his now-wife Joanne Tucker, while they both were studying acting at The Juilliard School in New York.

Prior to attending Juilliard, Driver, who enlisted in the Marine Corps just after 9/11, was serving as a mortarman with Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment and was preparing to deploy to Iraq when he was medically discharged due to an injury from a mountain biking accident. He’s openly discussed his struggle to find meaning, community and self-worth during his abrupt transition back into the civilian world—and how his training at Juilliard equipped him to use language to deal with those feelings in a constructive way.

“I was really for the first time discovering playwrights and characters and plays that had nothing to do with the military but were somehow describing my military experience that before, to me, was indescribable, and I felt myself becoming less aggressive as I was able to put words to feelings for the first time and realizing what a valuable tool that was,” said Driver to an audience during a 2015 TED Talk as part of the PBS “War & Peace” series, adding that to his surprise, he realized that the military and theater communities were more alike than he had previously thought as both work together to accomplish a mission greater than themselves. “I



JENN EMERLING

Audience members give a standing ovation following AITAF’s November 2019 performance of “A Raisin in the Sun” in New York City. The annual event, which is held around Veterans Day, is an outreach to the New York City veterans community and is just one of the many performances the organization provides at military installations worldwide each year.

thought, ‘How great would it be to create a space that combined these two seemingly dissimilar communities?’” Driver said.

Thus, AITAF was born, a project that started slowly and grew in synchrony with Driver’s budding career as an actor. Widely known for his portrayal of the dark and menacing Kylo Ren in the “Star Wars” franchise’s most recent trilogy, Driver has also appeared in various theater productions including “Burn This” on Broadway, for which his performance was nominated for a Tony Award, and in the HBO series “Girls,” which earned him three Emmy nominations. Driver also was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Sup-

porting Actor in the 2018 film “BlacKkKlansman” and Best Actor in the 2019 film “Marriage Story,” in which he starred opposite Scarlett Johansson.

According to AITAF executive director Lindsay Miserandino, Driver and Tucker wrote letters, asked favors, and for the first six or seven years, held one or two events a year at military bases as well as an annual event in New York City for the local veterans community. Those numbers slowly grew, and in 2019, AITAF produced 15 events at military installations across the globe.

The format is simple: AITAF gathers a group of talented, high-profile actors who volunteer their time and talent and travel to bases and stations to perform contemporary American plays or monologues in a strikingly minimalist way—without costumes, sets or lighting. The focus, by default, is on the language—“to show that theater can be created in any setting,” said Driver.

“It’s a powerful thing, getting in a room with complete strangers and re-



JENN EMERLING

From the left, Marine veteran and actor Rob Riggie, director Kip Fagan, actor Darren Pettie and AITAF program director Erica Newhouse greet Col Kevin Hutchison, CO of Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., following an AITAF event there, on May 9, 2019.



AITAF co-founder and actor Joanne Tucker, right, presents the 2019 Bridge Award to Air Force veteran Shairi Engle, at The Public Theater in New York City in October 2019. Engle received the honor for her play "Tampons, Dead Dogs and Other Disposable Things."

GILES CLARK

minding ourselves of our humanity, and that self-expression is just as valuable a tool as the rifle on your shoulder," Driver said during his 2015 TED Talk. "I can think of no better community to arm with a new means of self expression than those protecting our country."

Past AITAF artists have included household names like Rachel Brosnahan, Ben Stiller, Marine veteran Rob Riggle, Taye Diggs, Jake Gyllenhaal, Keri Russell and Samira Wiley, among dozens of others.

Actor Laura Linney, who participated in AITAF's first-ever event at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., in 2008, loved the experience and has continued her involvement in the organization over the years.

"I was so moved by Adam, what he was doing and how much he loves the military and the people who give their lives there, and the way he loves the arts," said Linney. "It made complete sense that he would want to bring those two communities together. The arts are inherently healing, so it's a portal into a whole other resource that I believe many communities aren't aware of. Of how medicinal the arts can be, how intimate, how inspiring it can be, and how it makes you just feel a lot less alone. I think the arts are good for everybody, and there's a real place for it within the culture of the military."

The organization also hosts film screenings at military installations during which a high-profile actor or director picks a movie that's meaningful to them and, following a showing, discusses the film with a moderator. AITAF also employs student veteran interns at its headquarters in New York through a paid internship program.

With the addition of the Bridge Award, AITAF has expanded its reach



PATRICK DUNFORD

A World War II veteran enjoys an AITAF-sponsored reading at the New York State Veterans' Home in St. Albans, N.Y., in 2019.

to help ensure that the military experience is brought into the arts community—which doesn't always mean that veterans' contributions have to be overtly military related.

"Part of bridging that military-civilian divide is that just because someone is in the military doesn't mean that they wear their uniform all the time," said Newhouse, noting that the 2019 Bridge Award winner, Air Force veteran Shairi Engle, submitted a play that was not military themed. "There's a person underneath that uniform. Just like if we wore uniforms to our jobs and people thought that's all that we were, we're not."

Notably, all three winners of the Bridge Award have been first-time playwrights despite the fact that AITAF has received submissions from professional writers and Emmy award winners. But particularly for those who are writing for the first time, it can be disheartening to submit something you've poured your time and energy into and not receive any sort of response or indication that anyone has actually read it. In an effort to foster true connection among people and communities, the Bridge Award process includes a descriptive evaluative form filled out by the members of the judging panel, and each submitting writer has the option of requesting feedback based on those evaluations.

"Getting even one person to read what you've written is very challenging, so having access to a program like the Bridge Award where people who live and breathe 'story' every day in the course of their profession will provide you with feedback is very valuable," said Anton Sattler.

For Sattler, the journey has just begun. Until recently, he had never heard "Local Gods" read out loud before.

In June, AITAF organized a "closed door" reading of the play, recruiting actors like Jason Butler Harner of "Ozark" and Connie Shulman from "Orange is the New Black" to bring

For the latest information about the Bridge Award, including submission guidelines for 2021, visit <https://aitaf.org/bridge-award/>



Adam Driver, seated, and actor Michael Shannon, standing, perform “True West” at AITAF’s 10th anniversary event in New York, November 2018. Shannon is one of many well-known artists who volunteers his time and talent in support of AITAF’s mission to foster a connection between the military and theater communities.

“Local Gods” to life. Typically, the reading—designed to help the playwright further develop the play prior to its public debut—is conducted in person, but due to the coronavirus pandemic, it took place on a Zoom video call.

Regardless of the format, that first reading was highly beneficial for Sattler as he enters the collaborative stage of the production of “Local Gods” in anticipation of its forthcoming public reading in New York next year once theaters are able to reopen after the COVID-19 shutdown.

“How things live in peoples’ voices and bodies, it’s so different from how they live on the page, and you learn so much immediately. Theater is a collaborative art in a way that other written forms are not, and so he’s finally going to get collaborators now. That’s a really important gift that I think we can offer through this award,” said Anna O’Donoghue, the Bridge Award Chair. “Writing is a solitary action, but theater making is a collective one, so we can start to form the collective around these people.”

It’s a critical time for the arts community as theaters across the country are shuttered, stages are vacant, row after row of seats are empty and #savethearts is trending on Twitter—a reminder that the collective experience we find in theater and the arts is such an integral part of our society. The social distancing measures necessitated by the spread of COVID-19 have forced AITAF to think “outside the box” in regards to its programming, said Miserandino, and while film screenings over Zoom have been a welcome distraction for both artists and servicemembers, nothing can replicate the value of a true shared experience.

In the meantime, with the support of AITAF, Sattler will move forward with the process of preparing “Local Gods” for its public debut—and when the day finally comes, it will be a moment he surely won’t take for granted. 🍷

Actor Adam Breaux, left, talks with Marines following his performance in an AITAF reading at MCMWTC Bridgeport, Calif., May 9, 2019.



Leatherneck Laffs



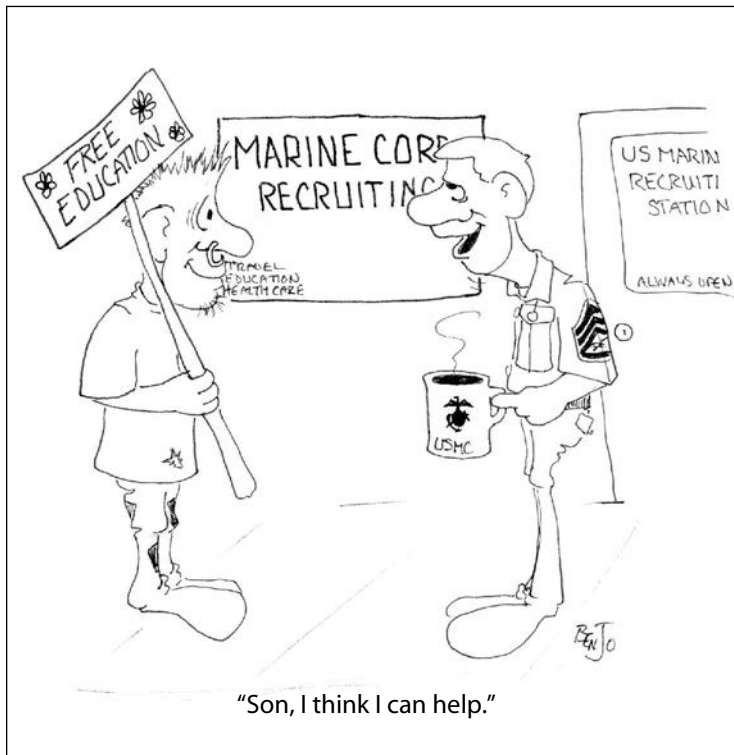
Marines taunt enemy gunners during attack



"I'm taking a stealthie."



"But I don't have a smirk on my face."



Commando Raid: Okinawa!



A F4U Corsair of MAG-31 destroyed by Japanese commandos. In the background is a twin-engine aircraft that was also destroyed in the raid.

By MSgt Jeff Dacus, USMCR (Ret)

The invasion of Okinawa on April 1, 1945, was an essential part of the Allied leapfrog campaign leading to the invasion of Japan. In addition, the capture of the island's airfields would deprive the Japanese of bases for their terror weapon—the kamikaze. American B-29s from the Marianas were pummeling Japanese cities with increasing impunity. Bases on Iwo Jima allowed fighter support for the big bombers. The capture of Okinawa, a prefecture of Japan, was both a strategic and psychological blow to the Japanese war effort. The desperate Japanese would use every weapon and tactic at their disposal to defeat an American invasion.

Four American divisions, both Marine and Army, hit the beaches on L-Day, the first day of the invasion. The 6th Marine Division's 4th Marine Regiment quickly captured Yontan Airfield. Marines of the 6th Engineer Battalion arrived by the afternoon and began repairing the airfield. It was not long before American airplanes were operating from the strip, providing day and night fighter cover for the fleet and close air support for the ground campaign. On April 8, the first transport aircraft began evacuating those who were severely wounded to hospitals on Guam.

The campaign went into full swing with the severing in half of the island on April 5. The 1st and 6th Marine Divisions fought a relatively easy campaign to the north, and the 7th and 96th Army Divisions hit strong resistance in the south. Soon, Marines and Army divisions were fighting in the south along the so-called Shuri Line with increasing casualties. Airplanes from both Yontan and Kadena airfields were flying day and night, fighting off kamikazes as well as bombing and strafing Japanese positions. Ground crews worked 24 hours a day to keep the aircraft operational.

The first bombing missions by Japanese planes occurred on April 1, using conventional and kamikaze attacks. On April 6, the Japanese began large-scale organized raids at the eventual cost of thousands of planes and pilots. A suicide sortie attempted by the battleship *Yamato* ended with the destruction of the great ship and no damage to the American invasion fleet. Soldiers and Marines ashore were not the only ones who had to fear the Japanese. Dozens of raids by both regular bombers and kamikazes also pummeled the fleet. Eventually, 126 ships would be sunk along with at least 64 suffering significant damage.

Unknown to the Marines, Sailors and soldiers operating at Yontan Airfield, the Japanese had an unusual treat in store for

them. The Japanese Army planned for a special group of commandos to attack the airfield, crash-landing planes to disgorge their passengers and destroy American airpower on the ground; however, it would not be skilled commandos who made the first Japanese landing on the newly captured field.

The first enemy aircraft to land on Yontan field after its capture were not suicide bombers intent on wreaking havoc on the field. Instead, it was a solitary Japanese fighter plane. The day after Yontan was captured, a single airplane came in low over the water below radar. Lowering his landing gear, the pilot slid back the canopy and prepared to land. Hundreds of Marines watching the landing noticed the giant red circles on the fuselage of the airplane. Touching down lightly on the runway, it smoothly came to a stop. The pilot leaped out and proceeded toward the damaged headquarters building. Suddenly, he stopped, and a confused look appeared on his face. Surrounding him were dozens of Marines with rifles pointed directly at him. Then he made his final mistake. Too quickly, he reached for his holster flap. Weapons flashed, and the unfortunate Japanese pilot was riddled with bullets. A sardonic voice from a nearby Marine summed up an age-old truism, "There's always some poor damn bastard that doesn't get the word!"



FILE PHOTO

Michiro Okuyama, an experienced officer and paratrooper, was the commander of the Giretsu Kuteitai during its only mission.



IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY

Giretsu Kuteitai commandos adjust their camouflage before boarding their aircraft prior to assaulting American airfields.



USAAF

After the Americans assumed control of Yontan, it was developed into a major base for the advance toward Japan.

Due to the rugged terrain and fanatical resistance, Okinawa turned into one of the most intense battles of the Pacific War. The Marines and soldiers finally broke through the tough Shuri Line positions on May 3 but encountered even more difficult hill positions like Sugar Loaf and Half Moon. On May 15, the Japanese Army High Command decided that it was time

for extreme measures. A specially trained unit was to undertake the airborne assault on the American-held airfield at Yontan.

The unit, originally organized to attack the American B-29 bases on Saipan in the summer of 1944, was formed by the Kempeitai or Japanese Army police force and had previously supported and launched clandestine operations to Australia and

other rear areas. They were led by Captain Michiro Okuyama, the commander of the 1st Raiding Engineer Company who was well-trained in explosives and demolition.

The original plan was for the commandos to fly to Saipan and crash land. After debarking from their aircraft, they would plant charges on the American airplanes, destroying as many as possible. They

A destroyed Corsair at Yontan. In the background are Corsairs and Hellcats continuing to perform missions in support of the invasion. (USA)



would also look for ammunition dumps and fuel storage areas.

The commandos began training in December of 1944. Called the Giretsu Kuteitai, the detachment originally consisted of 126 men from Japanese parachute units. Later, 10 intelligence officers joined the unit. With mockups of B-29s built from parts of wrecked American bombers shot down over Japan, the unit began intense training. Taking pride in their special status, the paratroopers chosen for the operation fabricated their own camouflage uniforms. Over and over, they practiced pushing open doors and spreading out along the rows of derelict B-29s. Using the latest photo intelligence, they practiced with the layout of fields on Saipan. Unfortunately, in preparing explosives for the mission, they found that it was difficult to attach their magnetic charges to the skin of the B-29s.

Two new types of weapons were designed to destroy the B-29s. The first was a four-pound explosive mounted on the

end of a pole. A suction cup was placed on the top of the pole. The commandos would push the pole up under the wing of a B-29, and then pull a string that started a delay fuse which would blow off the wing of the B-29 and set the aircraft on fire. A second special weapon was a 15-foot long line charge with a small sandbag weight at one end. Commandos would throw it over the wing of the B-29, and it would set off a series of small explosions to blow off the wing and ultimately burn out the American bombers.

Their first mission was scheduled for early 1945. Bombers would take off from Japan, refuel on Iwo Jima, and attack Saipan. Unfortunately for the suicide commandos, the Iwo Jima airfields were lost to the Americans in February and a similar plan to attack Iwo Jima was canceled when the Americans invaded Okinawa in April. Eventually, the Japanese high command chose May 23, 1945, as the date for the use of the commandos—they would attack Yontan Airfield in conjunction with

conventional bombers in Operation Gi.

The operation was moved back one day due to weather and logistics problems but fortunately for the Japanese, the evening of May 24, 1945, was clear with a full moon. Nine Ki.21 Sally bombers carried the commandos from Kengun Airfield on Kyushu toward Yontan. It was planned that seven waves of bombers would attack American ships and bases from early evening until midnight. The Giretsu commandos were part of raid number seven, which also had conventional bombers attacking Ie Shima.

The Marines' 1st Provisional Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group around Yontan took a terrific toll on the attacking aircraft. Marine fighter pilots struck down many of the attackers that managed to get through the ships' antiaircraft fire. As the skies darkened, VMF-311 tallied four kills, including three under the guns of Second Lieutenant Carl S. Soreide. VMF-312 added three more. After dark, the night fighters went to work. VMF (N)-533 shot



A front view of the only Ki.21 to successfully crash land.

down six planes. Three fell to First Lieutenant Albert F. Dellamano. Almost all of the victims were twin-engine planes, indicating some may have been part of the Giretsu. Despite the intense anti-aircraft fire and the proficiency of the fighter planes, several Japanese airplanes made it through the American ships and anti-aircraft fire to unload their bombs on the American airfields at Yontan and Kadena.

Of the nine planes carrying commandos, four were shot down before they reached Okinawa. The remaining aircraft arrived at Yontan about 8:30 p.m. One was shot down just as it reached the field, crashing into an anti-aircraft gun, scattering the gun crew and putting the weapon out of action but four others managed to get through the defenses. Three of the Sallys were shot down attempting to crash land on Yontan runway. A few of their passengers may have survived and carried out their part in the raid. Only one of the aircraft successfully crash-landed despite being riddled by bullets. Eight or 10 commandos scuttled from the airplane in the half-light of burning aircraft.

Throughout the evening, kamikazes and conventional bombers attempted to attack both the fleet and the airfields. These constant air raids drove the defending Americans into foxholes and shelters around the field. There were brief minutes before the Marines on the ground realized that there were Japanese in their midst. As the attackers spread out around the field, the pilots, ground crews and various Marine detachments of Marine Air Group 31 were put to work as infantrymen.

At first, the nature of the attack made it difficult to see the Japanese in their camouflaged uniforms moving about on the flight line and looking for high-value targets. The explosions of various charges and resulting fires briefly lit up the area and made the attackers easier targets. Hundreds of Marines grabbed their weapons and began firing at the

shadowy shapes moving along the flight line. The tremendous amount of gunfire from the Marines cut down the Japanese but also sprayed tents and aircraft.

The Marines and other ground personnel quickly tracked down and killed the invaders. Ten commandos were found dead strewn around the airfield. Three more bodies were found in the crashed airplane. The other three airplanes, which were shot down or intentionally crashed, each contained 14 bodies. A total of 69 dead Japanese were found. One Japanese, who may have been a commando, was found and killed in some bushes off the field the next day. A Japanese source claimed that another commando survived and made his way through American lines to join Japanese commander General Mitsuru Ushijima, who was trapped in southern Okinawa.

Seven American airplanes, a PB4Y-1 Liberator four-engine bomber, four R5D (or C-54) transports, and two F4U Corsairs, were destroyed. A total of 26 other aircraft suffered damage and 70,000 gallons of aviation fuel were burned. Two

Marines were killed and 18 were wounded but air operations were only briefly interrupted. By 12 p.m. on May 25, full air activities were being conducted from Yontan.

The bloody campaign on Okinawa continued until September. More than 100,000 civilians died in the fighting along with about 100,000 Japanese soldiers. There were approximately 82,000 American casualties. The Japanese planned a later suicide mission involving 200 aircraft with 2,000 commandos attacking several different targets. It was canceled in August 1945 after the U.S. dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

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. He is the author of the new book, "The Fighting Corsairs: The Men of Marine Fighting Squadron 215." He lives in Vancouver, Wash.



Marines and soldiers inspect the body of a dead Japanese commando following the enemy's failed attempt at attacking the American-held airfield.

Passing the Word

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

Marines Donate Plasma After Recovering from Virus

Marines assigned to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif., who previously tested positive for the COVID-19 virus donated plasma at Naval Medical Center San Diego, July 14.

In support of the development of an effective treatment, the Defense Department launched a campaign in late May to collect 8,000 units of plasma from patients who have recovered from the coronavirus.

“The hope is that these Marines who have tested positive and recovered from COVID-19 will have developed antibodies,” said Ellyn Alcantara, a clinical nurse assigned to the medical center’s blood donor center. “These antibodies could lead to developments in a treatment for COVID-19.”

All of the Marines volunteered to donate their plasma with the hope that their antibodies will help others.

“It makes me feel good to be a part of the solution to this pandemic,” said Private First Class Xavier Flores, one of the plasma donors.

Upon arriving at the donor center, the Marines were given a medical health screening to determine their donor eligibility. Once they are cleared to donate plasma, a complete blood count and hematocrit test ensures the proportion of red blood cells in the body is optimal

for donation and would have no adverse effects on the donor.

“A transfusion transmissible infection test will be performed on all donors as a part of their screening process,” said Lieutenant Therica Reynolds, USN, the officer in charge of the blood donor center at NMCS. “We’re trying to maximize our plasma collection and do our part for patient care.”

Reynolds said the plasma donation process—known as apheresis—takes about an hour from the beginning of the screening process to the end of the collection. Convalescent COVID-19 plasma, or CCP, from recovered COVID-19-positive patients has been used at the medical center to help symptomatic patients recover.

“A qualified donor is eligible to donate every 28 days, and one person can potentially donate four doses, or bags, of CCP per visit,” Reynolds said. “We highly encourage potential donors to make an appointment for one of our five apheresis machines. Anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and has recovered is encouraged to come into our [donation center] and get screened to donate.”

NMCS’s mission is to prepare servicemembers to deploy in support of operational forces, deliver high quality healthcare services, and shape the future of military medicine through education,

training and research. It employs more than 6,000 active-duty military personnel, civilians and contractors.

PO3 Jacob L. Greenberg, USN

Marine Corps Marathon To Hold Virtual Events in 2020

The COVID-19 virus has claimed another big event for runners.

Marine Corps Marathon officials announced July 20 that the traditional fall race would be canceled for the first time in its 45-year history.

The 2020 in-person marathon events scheduled to take place in and around Washington, D.C., from Oct. 23-25 will now be entirely virtual. Rick Nealis, the director of the marathon, said the decision was made after several meetings with local government and public health officials.

“We understand this is disappointing news for so many, but we could no longer envision a way to gather together in compliance with safety guidelines,” Nealis said in a statement. “While we are unable to celebrate in person this October, we are excited about the opportunity to bring the 45th anniversary event to the homes of runners around the world through a rewarding and engaging virtual experience.”

Last year’s marathon drew more than 30,000 participants to the streets of Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Major Terry Herzog, Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif., and founder of the Barstow Marines Running Club, said he would be participating in the virtual event.

“Participants pay their fees, then run at a location of their choice and send the results to the marathon committee,” he explained. “Those results are compiled and analyzed, then the winners in the several categories of the virtual event are determined.”

Participants in this year’s marathon can choose a day between Oct. 1 and the Marine Corps birthday on Nov. 10 to run.

The Marine Corps Marathon is not the first major race to be canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Boston Marathon was canceled in May after initially being postponed. The New York Marathon and the Chicago Marathon also have been canceled.

The decision to cancel the Marine Corps Marathon was made July 17 by General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, according to *The*



PO2 ERWIN JACOB V. MICIANO, USN

A phlebotomist draws blood from PFC Johnny Cadengo at Naval Medical Center San Diego, Calif., July 14, in support of the DOD’s effort to collect convalescent plasma from servicemembers who have recovered from the COVID-19 virus.



KEITH HAYES

The Marine Corps Marathon draws large crowds of participants and spectators in and around Washington, D.C., each October. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's race will be held virtually.

Washington Post, which first reported that the in-person events had been called off.

Nealis previously had announced in June that two other events that take place during the marathon weekend—the Marine Corps Marathon Kids Run and 10K—would be virtual-only.

Keith Hayes

Group Therapy Promotes Mental Wellness for Participants

Mental health is an essential component of overall wellness. Leaders at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., understand the importance of mental health and recognize that everyone deals differently with personal and professional hardships.

Group therapy has been offered at Camp Pendleton for a decade in an effort to support operational readiness and community health. Strengthening mental resilience, improving communication, and building support systems are crucial to mission success, and group therapy can be a great way to exercise these skills.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, experts say that the number of people struggling with anxiety, isolation and depression has increased. To assist those at Camp Pendleton who are dealing with mental health issues, the Substance Abuse Rehabilitation Program, Treatment Program Department (SARP TPD) at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton offers participation in a number of groups, which meet both virtually and in person, to active-duty and active reserve servicemembers.

“It offers a format that individual therapy doesn’t, which is to share your experiences with other people and learn from the experiences that other people have had,” said Navy veteran Ian Beard,

a psychiatric technician with SARP TDB. “Also, it helps you to know that you’re not the only one experiencing these things.”

Despite the strong sense of mental resilience among servicemembers, at some point, everyone needs help. Group therapy is a great way to strengthen mental resilience before or after training and deployments and during uncertain times like these.



Ian Beard

LCPL KERSTIN ROBERTS, USMC



Claudia Baliscao

LCPL KERSTIN ROBERTS, USMC

“Group therapy strengthens mental resiliency through the group’s skills and supportive space to practice those skills. Like in our cognitive behavioral therapy skills group, we teach the participants how your thoughts and feelings affect your actions,” said Claudia Baliscao, the deputy department head for SARP TDB. “Once an individual understands that concept, it builds mental resiliency, but it’s more powerful in group because everyone shares their experiences. This makes the application of the skills easier to learn because it shows everyone in the group where they can use those skills in their day-to-day lives.”

The group therapy classes provided at Camp Pendleton promote better emotional health practices and resilience in a safe and supportive environment. They allow servicemembers to use new and healthy ways of communicating. Fortunately, since group therapy can be hosted virtually and in large classrooms, social distancing can be maintained during sessions. During these sessions, the participants are encouraged to give and receive support.

“Group therapy made me more aware of how I react to certain situations, which in turn prepared me to deal with problems when they arose,” said retired Gunnery Sergeant Sami Babaidhan. “The best thing I took away from group therapy was that it helped me connect with others in general. After getting to know everyone in my group, I realized I could trust them. That gave me more confidence to go to others when I was struggling.”

Hearing others talk about their experiences helps reinforce the knowledge that you are not alone. Dealing with stressful situations can often start to feel isolating, and in the current state of things, with social interactions limited, those feelings can be heightened.

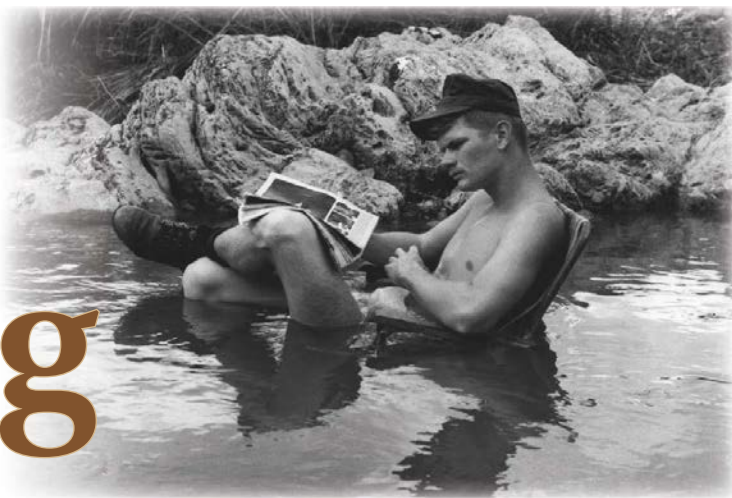
“It was some of the best therapy I’ve had,” said Babaidhan. “For the simple purpose that for years I felt like it was just me with these problems. Seeing a group of my peers that are going through the same stuff and being able to openly talk about it was extremely valuable.”

The bedrock of the Marine Corps community is the practice of looking out for others. This becomes harder to do when the trials of life begin to pile on. By strengthening mental resilience, learning to better communicate with others, and building support systems through group therapy, Marines are better capable of serving both their brothers and sisters in arms as well as the communities around them.

LCpl Kerstin Roberts, USMC



GRUNT Slang



PFC E. HILDRETH, USMC

By Gordon L. Rottman

Editor's note: "Grunt Slang in Vietnam Words of War" by Gordon L. Rottman provides a unique insight into the language used by Marines and soldiers on the ground in Southeast Asia while also offering a window to a different time when the concept of political correctness was decades away. The following terms are just some of the 1,450 phrases Rottman defined in his book.

Grunt: The epitome of the Army and Marine infantryman in Vietnam. The name is derived from the low grunt one made when rising to his feet after a break with a full rucksack, weapon,

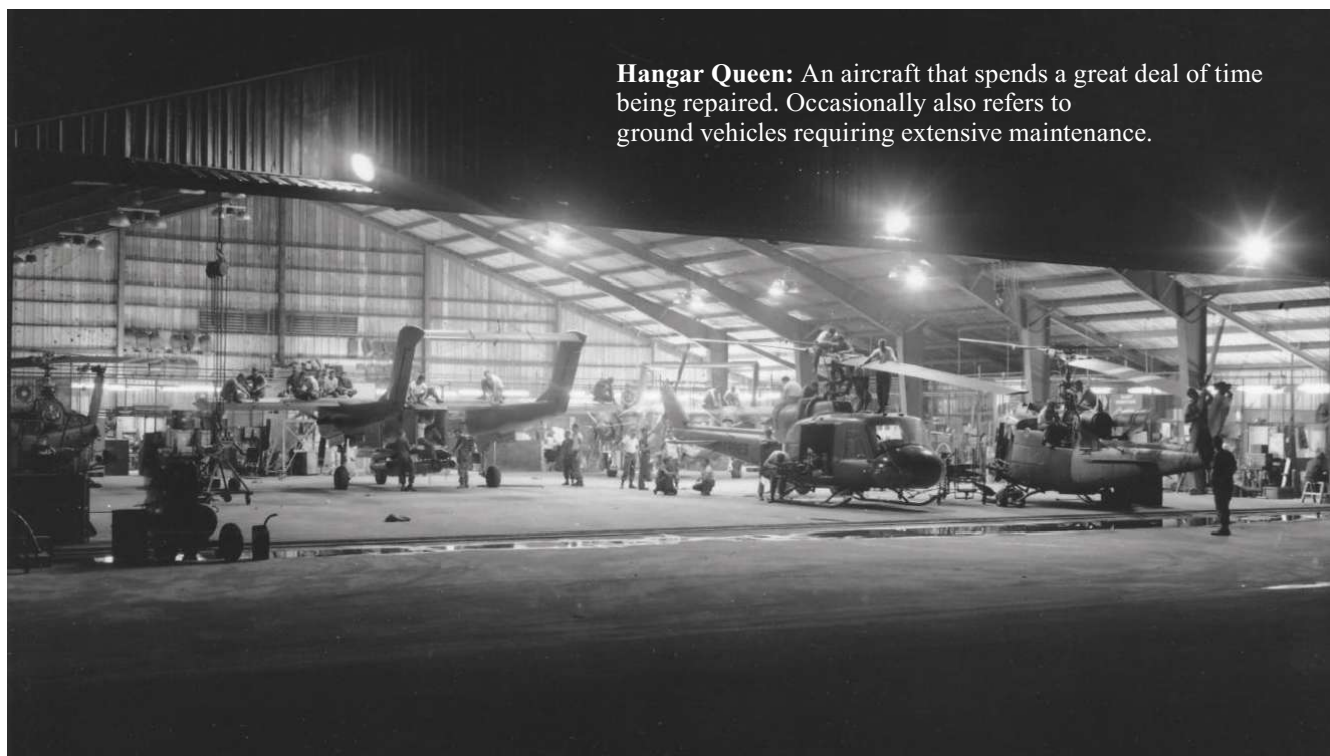
ammunition, rations, water and equipment. Besides his own gear, he would carry a variety of ammunition and items for his squad and platoon: belted MG ammo, 40 mm grenades, smoke grenades, LAW, Claymore mine, trip flares and/or a mortar round. The term "Grunt" originated with the Marines and soon spread to the Army.

Agent Orange: Mixture of two herbicides delivered as an aerial-sprayed defoliant from transports and helicopters during the 1962-1971 Operation Ranch Hand. It caused serious environmental damage, and traces of dioxin have caused major health issues for many exposed

individuals, military and civilian alike. All veterans are eligible for an Agent Orange Registry health exam by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Buddy Plan: Marine Buddy Program allowed two or more friends to enlist together and ensured they would attend recruit training together and follow on school if they were in the same military occupation specialty (MOS) and one wasn't recycled.

CONEX: Steel corrugated shipping container, Container Express boxes were introduced in 1952. They measured 8 feet, 6 inches long by 6 feet, 3 inches



Hangar Queen: An aircraft that spends a great deal of time being repaired. Occasionally also refers to ground vehicles requiring extensive maintenance.

CPL A. K. MACK, USMC

wide and 6 feet, 10 inches high with double doors on one end, mounted on skids and lifting rings. More than 300,000 were shipped to Vietnam with most remaining in country and used for storage, quarters, comm centers, aid stations, FDCs, and other functions.

Cordon: To “cordon off” was to surround and block all routes to and from villages or other sites/areas to the enemy or to search the area for hidden enemy, contraband, and tunnels. Derived from the French corde (cord), implying to “tie-off.”

Critically dead: Macabre term for an incinerated, dismembered, mutilated or decomposed corpse. The lack of a pulse was unnecessary to confirm death. Also known as “seriously dead.”

Dog and pony show: Full-fledged staff briefing designed more to impress than provide information. Nothing like today’s over-produced PowerPoint slide presentations. These were simply big white paper flip charts or the backs of old map sheets and felt markers.

“Don’t call me sir. I work for a living”: Common response by staff noncommissioned officers when they were addressed as “sir.”

Drive-on rag: Scarf or towel draped loosely around the neck to wipe off sweat and pad slings and shoulder straps. This could be an issue olive-green bath towel, triangular bandage or issue neckerchief.

Fat Farm: If recruits couldn’t make it through the Marine physical fitness program, they could be sent to the physical conditioning platoon to lose weight and get in shape.

Clover-leafing: A patrolling technique when a company was moving through an area and periodically halted with each platoon establishing a perimeter and dispatching small patrols to loop out to the flanks to search the area and then return by a different route. If engaged, the patrols would be reinforced by the rest of the platoon and even the company. (Photo by Cpl S.A. Tilson, USMC)



Elephant turd: 500-gallon black rubber (neoprene) fuel bladders carried in 2.5-ton cargo trucks and helicopters, or positioned on airfields and motor pools for refueling. (Photo by Sgt Mike Padillas, USMC)

Frag bag: Canvas bag or pack holding fragmentation and other hand grenades stowed in observation helicopters and gunships to drop on targets of opportunity.

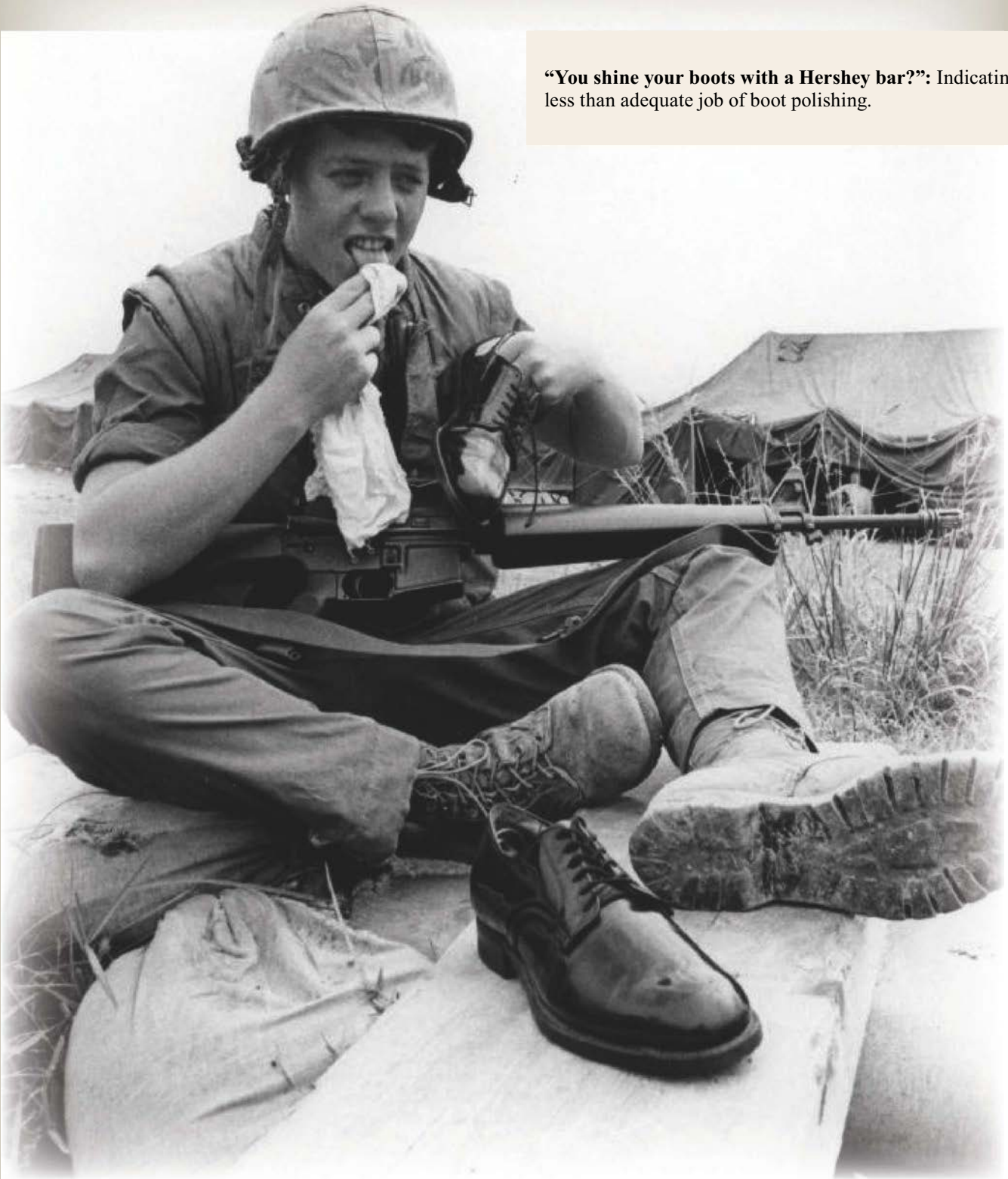
Grab their belts to fight them: Viet Cong/North Vietnamese adage for a close battle tactic. Move in as close as

possible to prevent the Americans from using artillery, mortars, air strikes and gunships. Within “danger close” ranges.

Hootch boy: Locally hired Vietnamese boy paid to polish boots and perform minor barracks chores. Aka “boot polish boy.”



“You shine your boots with a Hershey bar?”: Indicating a less than adequate job of boot polishing.



SSGT BOB BOWEN, USMC

Indig: Indigenous. Identified low-cost field equipment designed for indigenous troops. Indig rucksacks, ponchos, poncho liners, rations, etc. These were of marginal but workable quality at very low cost made in Japan and Okinawa. The term also referred to indig (local) troops; usually ethnic minorities.

“If you don’t pay attention in this class, ya’ gonna die in Vietnam!”: After this had been shouted at recruits

and students 40 or 50 times, it went in one ear and out the other.

John Wayne it: Tough it out. If “Duke” can do it, you can do it, or you can at least try.

Junk on the bunk: All of a service-member’s web gear and field equipment laid out on his bunk for inspection. Foot and wall lockers would be open for inspection too.

Laterite: Rusty-red gravelly soil rich in iron and aluminum and widely found in hot-wet tropical areas. Troops operating in laterite soil (terre rouge—French) areas would find their sweat/rain-dampened uniforms, gear, hair, and skin permeated with laterite dust for a reddish cast. “Dangdest unit I’ve ever seen. Everyone was a redhead.”

Leatherneck Square: An area just south of the Vietnamese DMZ. The

corners of the square were Marine bases at Con Thien and Firebase Gio Linh in the north, and Dong Ha Combat Base and Cam Lo in the south, making it about 6 miles wide east to west and 9 miles deep north to south.

Lieutenant with a compass: The most dangerous thing on earth according to NCOs.

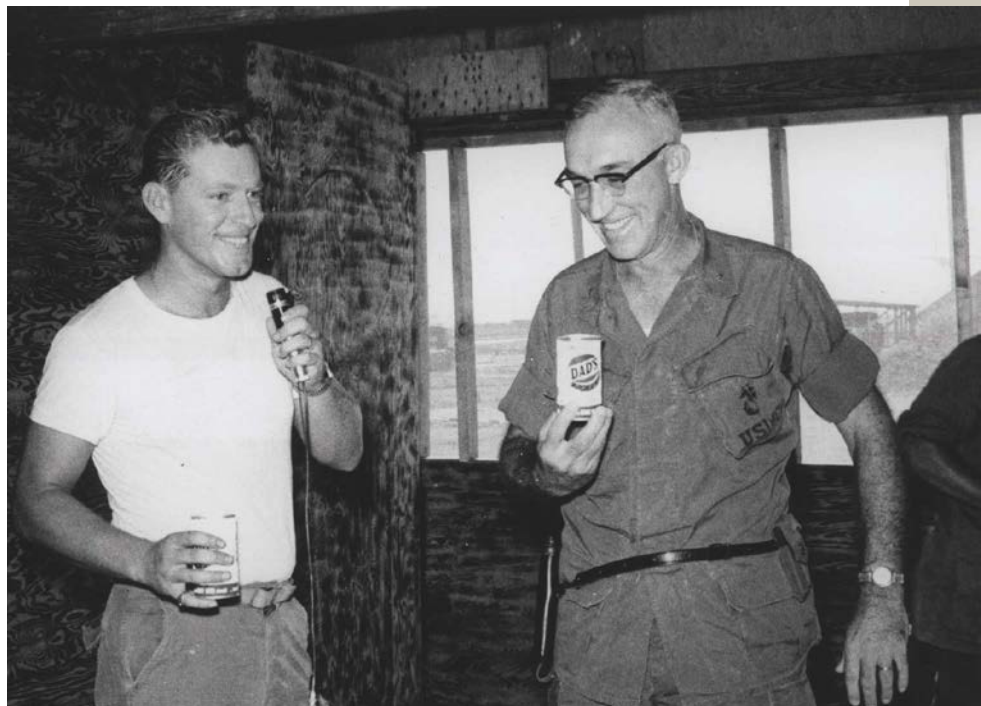
Non-rated men: Marines in the pay grades E-1 through E-3, below corporal, and not rated as NCOs.

Outta sight, outta mind: If the first sergeant can't find you, he can't make you work or perform other duties. Of course, once you're found ...

Prisoner snatch: Small-scale ambush or raid with the objective of apprehending a prisoner for intelligence purposes. Extremely challenging and difficult to execute. Aka "snatch and grab" or "POW snatch."

Scrounge: A skill possessed by one of the most essential, valuable, and often maligned members of a unit. Requires skills in communications, negotiations, patience, gaining trust and closing the deal.

"Takes a licking and keeps on ticking": A piece of equipment suffering abuse and still functioning. From a series of Timex wristwatch radio and TV com-



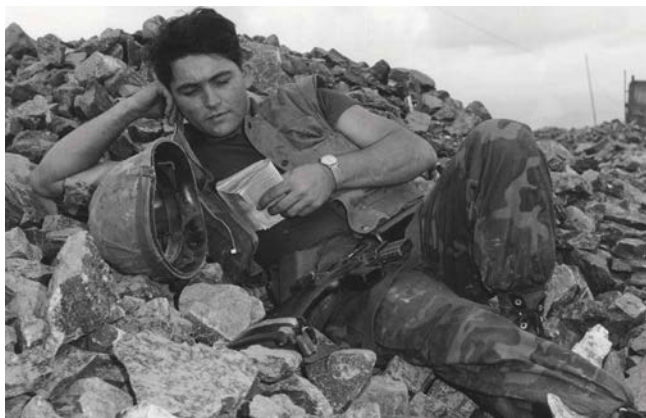
Pogey bait: Candy, snacks, and other goodies purchased from the "geedunk bar" (ship's canteen or snack bar). (Photo by SGT Dennis Fisher, USMC)

mercials in the 1950s and 1960s. A piece of equipment that is "GI proof" is hard to break or incorrectly operate.

Tu Do Street: An avenue in southeast Saigon lined with cafes and cheap hotels; a popular hangout where anything or anyone could be bought.

Author's bio: Gordon L. Rottman joined the Army in 1967 and served with the 5th Special Forces Group in Vietnam from 1969-1970. He later served in the airborne infantry, long range patrol and intelligence assignments until retiring after 26 years. He was a Special Operations Forces scenario writer at the Joint Readiness Training Center and is now a freelance writer. 🦖

Spider hole: A Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army concealed one-man foxhole with a liftable camouflage cover or lid made of thatch-like lattice of sticks, bamboo, vines, and leaves.



CAPT MARK ARNOLD, USMC



LCPL R. B. SANVILLE, USMC



Sandbagging: Goofing off. Implying one was lying around useless.

AAV Mishap Results in Death Of Eight Marines, One Sailor

Officials with the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF), announced the deaths of eight Marines and one Sailor after the July 30 sinking of an amphibious assault vehicle (AAV) off the coast of Southern California.

There were 16 servicemembers aboard the AAV when it began taking on water while conducting shore-to-ship waterborne operations training in the vicinity of San Clemente Island. Five Marines were rescued and brought aboard USS *Somerset* (LPD-25). One Marine was pronounced dead at the scene. Two Marines were transported from the scene to a hospital by helicopter.

After an exhaustive 40-hour search, leaders with the 15th MEU, I MEF, and the *Makin Island* Amphibious Ready Group concluded their search and rescue operation for the eight missing personnel after determining that there was little probability of a successful rescue.

"It is with a heavy heart that I decided to conclude the search and rescue effort," said Colonel Christopher Bronzi, the 15th MEU commanding officer. "The steadfast dedication of the Marines, Sailors and Coast Guardsmen to the persistent rescue effort was tremendous," he added.

"As we turn to recovery operations, we will continue our exhaustive search for our missing Marines and Sailor," said Col Bronzi.

On Aug. 6, the AAV was located at a depth of 385 feet. On Aug. 7, the AAV and the remains of seven Marines and one Sailor were recovered by a U.S. Navy-led underwater search and salvage team.

The Marines and Sailor who died are:

PFC Bryan J. Baltierra, 18, of Corona, Calif., a rifleman with "Bravo" Company, Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1/4, 15th MEU.

LCpl Marco A. Barranco, 21, of Montebello, Calif., a rifleman with Bravo Co, BLT 1/4 15th MEU.

PFC Evan A. Bath, 19, of Oak Creek, Wis., a rifleman with Bravo Co, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU.

Hospitalman Christopher Gnem, 22, of Stockton, Calif., a hospital corpsman with Bravo Co, BLT 1/4 15th MEU.

PFC Jack Ryan Ostrovsky, 21, of Bend, Ore., a rifleman with Bravo Co, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU.

Lance Corporal Guillermo S. Perez,

20, of New Braunfels, Texas, a rifleman with Bravo Co, 1/4, 15th MEU,

Cpl Wesley A. Rodd, 23, of Harris, Texas, a rifleman with Bravo Co, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU.

Cpl Cesar A. Villanueva, 21, of Riverside, Calif., a rifleman with Bravo Co, BLT 1/4, 15th MEU.

"I would like to thank everyone for their heartfelt condolences on behalf of our Marines, Sailors and family members affected by this tragic mishap. Let me add my condolences and prayers to theirs and ask everyone to keep the families of these servicemembers in their thoughts," said General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps.

The cause of the incident is being investigated.

Compiled from I MEF Media Releases

Ernest Anderson, 80, of Greeley, Colo. He was a Marine who later had a career with the Colorado State Patrol. He was a member of the MCL Union Colony Det. 1093 where he was a commandant and longtime member of the honor guard.

Sgt Daniel Anslinger Jr., 95, of Lodi, Calif. He enlisted in 1943 and served with 1st MAW in the Pacific. He was recalled in 1950 and served with 2nd MAW.

Robert H. "Pete" Barnes, 95, of Nashville, Tenn. He was a Marine Corps veteran of WW II and saw combat on Guadalcanal.

1stLt James E. "Red" Carpenter, 89, of Springfield, Va. He lied about his age and enlisted when he was 16. He was assigned to the photographic section at HQMC and worked in motion picture photography. He was part of the team that created the documentary films "The John Glenn Story" and the Academy Award winner "A Force in Readiness." After his 1967 retirement from the Marine Corps, he produced and directed films for the VA and George Washington University. He won several local Emmy awards in the Washington, D.C., area. He was an active member of the U.S. Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Association, serving a term as the organization's president. He was a good friend to *Leatherneck* and he will be missed.

Cpl Kenneth A. "Kenny" Dalsing, 95, of Seneca, Kan. He enlisted in 1943 and was an amphibian tractor crewman. He saw action at Emirau, Guam and Iwo Jima. After the war, he had a career in lumber and building supplies.

Walter D. Daniels Sr., 96, of Cheboygan, Mich. He served in the South Pacific during WW II and was seriously injured in a jeep rollover. After the war, he had a career in the paper industry.

MSgt Carl M. "Bud" DeVere Sr., 96, of Longmont, Colo. His 26 years in the Marine Corps included service during three wars. He enlisted in 1942 just after his high school graduation and saw action in the South Pacific while assigned to VMSB-141 on Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo. During the Korean War, he was assigned to 4th Bn, 11th Marines, 1stMarDiv in Munsan-Ni. In the late 1960s during the Vietnam War, he was assigned to *Leatherneck*, where he was the magazine's admin chief.

After his 1968 retirement, he worked for more than two decades for the Marine Corps Museum. He remained dedicated to *Leatherneck* for the rest of his life, often writing letters for Sound Off. He will be missed.

MSgt Richard E. "Dick" Elston, 90, of Dyer, Ind. He served in the Korean War and in Vietnam. He was a member of the VFW, the MCL and the American Legion.

Robert J. "Bob" Hill, 76, of Stafford, Va. He enlisted in 1964 and served with 2nd Bn, 9th Marines in Vietnam. He later had a career in accounting and information technology and for many years was the director of IT for the Marine Corps Association & Foundation. After his retirement from MCA&F, he drove a school bus for special needs students in his community. He was a good friend to MCA&F, *Leatherneck*, and *Marine Corps Gazette*, and he will be missed.

CMSgt Mallie P. Honeycutt Jr., 92, of Goldsboro, N.C. He spent 12 years in the Marine Corps as a naval gunfire shore chief with 1st ASCO, 1stMarDiv in China and with the 1st Provisional Brigade on Guam. In the early 1950s, he completed two Mediterranean cruises with the 6th Marines. In 1957 he transferred to the Air Force and retired in 1968. His awards include the Bronze Star.

MSgt Kernice M. "Mitch" Landry Sr., 90, of Lumberton, Texas. He enlisted when he was 17 and served for 22 years. He was a competitive marksman and was a member of the Marine Corps shooting team.

MGySgt Kenneth "Ken" Lane, 71, of Kingsport, Tenn. He served one tour in Vietnam with 1stMarDiv. He later deployed during Operation Desert Storm

and was a member of the 5th Civil Affairs Group in Fallujah, Iraq in 2005. He was a competitive marksman and was a member of the Marine Corps Reserve Pistol Team.

James L. Larsen, 82, of Crivitz, Wis. He served four years in the Marine Corps and later served in the Army in Vietnam.

Robert C. "Bob" Lehman, 86, of Woodbridge, N.J. He enlisted when he was 17 and fought with I/3/5 in the Korean War. He was a member of the VFW, the American Legion and the 1stMarDiv Association.

Lee "Gordy" McLester III, 80, of Oneida, Wis. He served in the Marine Corps and later was active in preserving the history and heritage of the Oneida Nation.

Glenn J. Mitchell, 95, of Ardmore, Okla. He served in the Pacific during WW II and fought on Iwo Jima. After the war ended, he was assigned to duty in Nagasaki, Japan, where his company guarded the bomb blast area.

Beverly A. Muri, 87, of Oakland Township, Mich. She served in the Marine Corps before embarking on a 40-year career in nursing.


PFC Lawrence A. Reid, 97, of Cedar Creek, Texas. He enlisted in 1942 and spent nearly three years in the Pacific theater. He was on New Guinea, New


Britain and Peleliu. After the war he had a long career as a draftsman. He was a member of the MCL.

Maurice P. Roche, 96, of Eastpointe, Mich. He served with E/2/6 during WW II and fought on Guadalcanal and Tarawa where he was wounded. After the war, he had a career as a firefighter.

Garrett C. Soule, 75, of Hutchinson Island, Fla. He enlisted after his high school graduation and served in the Vietnam War. He later had a successful career as a financial planner. He was also a certified numismatist.


Roger E. Tabbutt, 71, of Canal Winchester, Ohio. From 1967-1971 he was assigned to A/1/1. He saw action during the fighting in Hue City. He was a member of the MCA&F.

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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Another Good Letter

There was another good Sound Off letter, "Henderson Field," written by my former boss, MSgt Carl "Bud" DeVere, in the June issue. I have enclosed a picture of then-TSgt DeVere while he was stationed with the 4th Bn, 11th Marines, in Korea in 1954. He was not a good Marine, but an exceptional Marine. He was a true leader of men.

Jim Neering
Flushing, Mich.

• *Just before we went to press we learned of Bud DeVere's death. His obituary is on page 66.—Editor*

4th Marine Regiment 1958-1960

After reading both articles about the 4th Marine Regiment in the March and May issues of *Leatherneck* and three road trips from Illinois to Florida helping my daughter relocate, I would like to respond and share my experiences with the regiment from October 1958 to October 1960.

I and a few Marines had the privilege to serve in all three of the regiment's battalions in a matter of 40 to 41 days.



TSgt Carl "Bud" DeVere, left, 4th Bn, 11th Marines, and Lt L. Cabral, stationed together in Korea in 1954.

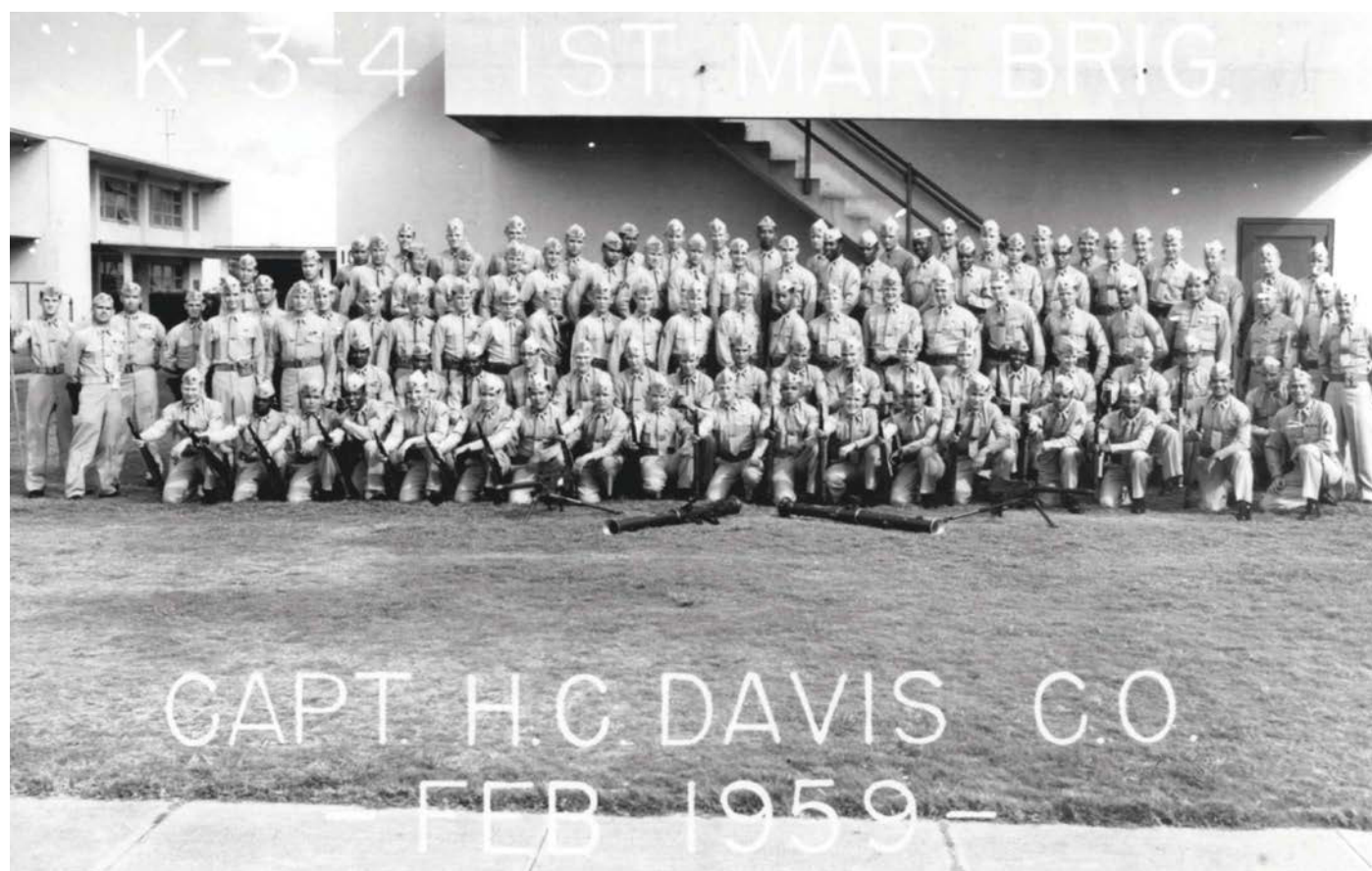
At the time, the 4th Marine Regiment's (Rein), home base was Kaneohe Bay, MCAS, Oahu, T.H., (Hawaii did not receive statehood until Aug. 21, 1959).

Setting sail from San Francisco on Sept. 30, 1958, at age 17 aboard USNS *General Edwin D. Patrick* (T-AP124), and arriving at Pearl Harbor on Oct. 5, 1958, I was assigned to K/3/4 on the 6th under the command of Captain H.C. Davis as 3rd Plt, 3d Squad BARman. I served with K/3/4 until May 8, 1959, at which time I was transferred to G/2/4 and was with them until June 8, 1959. I was then released to Weapons Platoon, A/1/4 as an ammo carrier for the .30-caliber light machine

gun. So, you see I served in all three battalions of the 4th Marine Regiment. Could they have been restructuring at that time?

Incidentally, when I was transferred to A/1/4, Capt Davis was assigned as its CO. But, that's not all for me and Capt Davis. When rotated back to the States, I was assigned to Brig Co, H&S Bn, MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., as a guard and chaser, and Capt Davis was CO of the base brig. I had a lot of respect for Capt Davis as a rifle company and brig company commander.

When Hawaii did become a state, President Dwight D. Eisenhower visited the station and the regiment lined both sides of the road at attention from the main gate



This photo of K/3/4 includes Capt Davis, standing second from left, and Bill Noe, second row, seventh from left. All are wearing the old chevrons.

with M1s at present arms as his motorcade passed. We also made a beach landing with the President in observance around Kailua, Oahu. I'm curious to know if the 4th still wears the Presidential Unit Citation.

Bill Noe
USMC, 1958-1960
New Lenox, Ill.


USMC Supporting Arms A Thing of the Past?

I read with great interest the article titled, "Warfighting Exercise Presented Leadership Opportunities for Corps Junior Leaders," in the July issue of our magazine. To me the second story about a U.S. Marine tank crew was perhaps the most impactful of the entire article. Having faithfully served as a Marine tank section leader during the Vietnam War, any and all stories about our "steel horses" is of great interest. As an aside, I am a lifetime member of both the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association as well as the Marine Corps Tankers Association. My mantra is, "Keep the Legacy of U.S. Marine Tanks Alive."

Many of your readers may not know about what the current Commandant of the Marine Corps is perpetrating on our beloved Corps. Based on a (misguided) attempt to make the U.S. Marine Corps


a "faster and lighter" fighting force, virtually all U.S. Marine supporting arms will be either drastically reduced or totally eliminated. That means that Marine tanks, artillery and "fast-mover" close air support will soon be a thing of the past. As of this summer, all U.S. Marine tank battalions will be eliminated, and the current Marine tankers will be transferred to new military occupations or released from active duty. As I understand it, in the future, if Marine grunts want or need tanks or artillery support, then a request call will be placed to the U.S. Army. And if they need CAS, a request call will be placed to the U.S. Air Force.

Sgt John Wear
USMC, 1966-1969
Elbert, Colo.

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

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Photo by Lance Cpl. James Bourgeois



Photo by Sgt. John Martinez



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Reader Assistance

Edited by Sara W. Bock

Reunions

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

• **Marine Corps Engineer Assn.**, Sept. 23-25, 2021, Fredericksburg, Va. Contact Maj Charlie Dismore, USMC (Ret), (512) 394-9333, www.marcorengasn.org.

• **Marine Corps Cryptologic Assn.**, September 2021, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Edgar Kitt, 2250 Heavenly View Dr., Henderson, NV 89014, (702) 454-1646, edgarkitt@earthlink.net.

• **Marine Corps Disbursing Assn.**, May 16-20, 2021, 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, 2021, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Steve Harris, (509) 499-8137, sandkh2@gmail.com.

• **7th Engineer Bn Vietnam Assn.**, Sept. 10, Arlington, Va. Contact Norbert Johnson, 6100 Cochrane Rd., Marlette, MI 48453, (810) 300-0782, nwgj@outlook.com, www.usmc.org/7th/.

• **Marine Corps Air Transport Assn. (VMGR/VMR)**, Sept. 3-6, Chicago, Ill. Contact CWO-4 Dave Harshbarger, USMC (Ret), (630) 394-2568, reunion@mcata.org, www.mcata.com.

• **Khe Sanh Veterans**, Oct. 25-Nov. 1, Albuquerque, N.M. Contact Tom Eichler, (773) 625-2101, teic1448@aol.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).

• **3rd Recon Bn Assn.**, Oct. 6-10, Tucson, Ariz. Contact Floyd Nagler, (952) 440-1553, floydnagler@yahoo.com.

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

• **1/5 (1986-1992)**, Sept. 10-13, Macomb, Ill. Contact Scott Hainline,

(309) 351-2050, ptimfi@yahoo.com.

• **1/27 (1968)**, July 2021, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Felix Salmeron, (469) 583-0191, mar463@aol.com.

• **"Stormy's" 3/3**, 2020 reunion postponed until 2021, date TBD, Branson, Mo. Contact Burrell Landes, (303) 734-1458, bhanon@comcast.net, www.stormys33.com.

• **G/2/7 (RVN, 1965-1970)**, Sept. 2, Carson City, Nev. Contact Travis Skaggs, (775) 291-6813, tskaggs6@email.com.


• **H/2/7 (RVN, 1965-1970)**, June 24-27, 2021, Jacksonville, Fla. Contact Steve Cone, (843) 424-8279, scone1948@yahoo.com.

• **Marine Corps Security Forces, Naval Weapons Station Earle**, Sept. 25-27, Colts Neck, N.J. Contact Dusty Wright, (618) 553-2205, slickstuff@nwcable.net.

• **U.S. Naval Disciplinary Command Portsmouth, N.H. (Marine Detachment)**, Sept. 14-20, North Conway, N.H. Contact Don Ferry, (972) 334-0609, don.ferry1942@gmail.com.

• **41st OCC/TBS 3-67**, Oct. 22, San

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Diego, Calif. Contact Paul Disario, (559) 273-9549, pdisario@comcast.net.

• **TBS, Co F, 6-70**, Oct. 22-25, Quantico, Va. Contact Tom Kanasky, (202) 366-3156, tlkanasky@earthlink.net, or Mitch Youngs, (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.

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

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

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

Ships and Others

• **USS Hornet (CV-8/CV/CVA/CVS-12)**, Sept. 16-20, Buffalo, N.Y. Contact Sandy Burket, P.O. Box 108, Roaring Spring, Pa., 16673, (814) 224-5063, (814) 3112-4976, hornetcva@aol.com.

• **USS Ranger (CVA/CV-61)**, Sept. 30-Oct. 3, Norfolk, Va. Contact Frank Thoms, (975) 595-6924, Kevin Auriemma, (973) 625-3893, or Tom Ballinger, (210) 403-3302.

Mail Call

• David McCandless, (513) 421-8704, david.mccandless@mail.house.gov, to hear from or about **Capt James K. MURPHY, USMC (Ret)**, who was the “Charlie” Co commander, 1/9, 3rdMarDiv, in Vietnam, 1969.

• Arnie “Sunny” Sundberg, 275 Pine St. #5, Clatskanie, OR 97016, (503) 369-1121, to hear from **Maj MCCARTY**, who was assigned to 2nd CAG in 1970.

• Robert Wallan, robertwallan7@gmail.com, to hear from anyone who knew or has information about **Cpl T.F. SMITH**, a senior drill instructor with Plt 364, San Diego, 1953, or **SgtMaj Leslie W. DEARDUEFF**, G-1, 1stMarDiv in Korea, 1950.

• K.W. Conklin, P.O. Box 173, Hillburn, NY 10931, to hear from anyone who has information about **Clarence F. PAWLOWSKI**, who was born on Feb. 11, 1912, and fought on Tarawa. He would like to know which units Pawlowski served with.

• Gene Spanos, (847) 532-2963, themarine@gmail.com, to hear from Marines who were assigned as “cross country brig chasers” at **Marine Barracks Great Lakes, Ill.**

• Peter Allen, (331) 442-1808, peter.r.allen@hotmail.com, to hear from anyone with information about **GySgt PRYATOR**

or **PRAYTOR**, a communications chief with **H&S Co, 5th Service Bn, 5thMarDiv, 1967-1968**.

Wanted

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

• Richard Witz, universal.rick@sbcglobal.net, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 3010, San Diego, 1971**.

• Jeff DeLine, jdkenman@gmail.com, wants a **platoon photo and recruit graduation book for Plt 219, Parris Island, 1958**.

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.boock@mca-marines.org, or write to Reader Assistance Editor, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134. 🐾



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Saved Round

By Jennifer Castro



AN AMPHIBIOUS TOY—During the 1940s and 1950s, military toys became popular throughout the United States, including this toy DUKW (“Duck”) amphibious truck manufactured in the late 1940s.

The toy, an original from Louis Marx and Company, features multiple U.S. Marine Corps insignias and has the manufacturer’s initials on the sides of each of the vehicle tires. The toy DUKW is in remarkably good condition and retains both its original “Marine” figure and its cloth truck bed cover, both of which were frequently lost. This DUKW, while not currently on display, is in the collection of the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va.

Louis Marx and Company, based in New York, was a major American toy manufacturer from 1919-1978 and was even the world’s largest toy manufacturer in its heyday of the 1950s. The company, founded by World War I veteran Louis Marx after he completed his military service, offered a variety of military toys including the ubiquitous small plastic “Army men” found in the toy chests of so many baby boomers. The DUKW and the company’s other military



toys are excellent examples of the integration of war-related items into nearly every aspect of the average family in mid-century America.

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

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