


APRIL 2023

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# LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

## **Beretta M9: Examining the Pistol's Complicated Legacy**



**Vietnam: Brother's  
Last Mission  
Leads Marine  
On Lifelong Quest**

**Founding Reservist  
Was Tough as Nails,  
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# Contents

LEATHERNECK—MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

APRIL 2023  
VOL. 106, No. 4

## Features

### 16 The 80 Year History of Women Marines at Parris Island

By CWO-3 Bobby J. Yarbrough, USMC

Women have worked and trained at Parris Island since 1943, but their presence in the Marine Corps today differs greatly from years past. Read here about how the roles and training of women in the Marine Corps and at Parris Island have changed over the last 80 years.

### 28 A Founding Reservist: First Sergeant Lawrence F. “Jim” Corbett, USMCR: Tough as Nails Marine NCO Also Had a Softer Side

By GySgt Brian A. Knowles, USMCR (Ret)

1stSgt Lawrence F. “Jim” Corbett was among the first active-duty Marines to join the Marine Corps Reserve shortly after its founding in 1916. This article tells the story of Corbett, who dedicated more than 25 years of service to the Corps and helped pave the way for the Marine Corps Reserve of today.

### 36 Last Line of Defense: A History of the Beretta M9

By Sam Lichtman

After 32 years of service, the Beretta M9 leaves behind a mixed legacy. To some, it is regarded as one of the finest service pistols of its time. To others, its design was inherently flawed. Read here about the history of the Beretta M9 and the challenges faced during its development and fielding to Marines.

### 46 Honorable Desertion

By Sgt Edward Evans, USMC

Veteran Marine Miles T. Barrett reenlisted in the Marine Corps to fight in France during WW I, but deserted and joined the Army after his requests to see combat were denied. Pulled from the *Leatherneck* archives, this piece tells the story of one of the strangest cases of desertion in Marine Corps history.

### 54 A Brother’s Journey: Five Decades to the Story of a Lifetime

By Kyle Watts

In October 1967, Alan Jensen died behind enemy lines on a Force Recon patrol in Vietnam. In the aftermath, his younger brother pieced together the story of Jensen’s last mission. Read the harrowing details of the patrol and the enduring connections made by those left behind.

### 64 Pollywog to Shellback

By Cpl Donald M. Edgemon, USMC

It is a Navy tradition for Sailors to become shellbacks when they cross the equator for the first time. This article from the *Leatherneck* archives details the initiation ceremony held on Sept. 9, 1947, aboard USS *Missouri* (BB-63) for a group of pollywogs as they join The Royal Order of Shellbacks.

54



## Departments

- 2 Sound Off
- 8 In Every Clime and Place
- 14 Corps Connections
- 26 Leatherneck Laffs
- 34 Sea Stories
- 50 We—the Marines
- 63 Passing the Word
- 68 In Memoriam
- 70 Reader Assistance
- 72 Saved Round

**COVER:** U.S. Marines with Marine Corps Embassy Security Guard Battalion practice firing their M9 service pistols on Range 12, Quantico, Va., Nov. 6, 2018. See page 36 to read more about the history of the Beretta M9. Photo by LCpl Quinn Hurt, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$3 (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 member or provide a one-year courtesy subscription to a non-member whose letter is selected.)

The article "Go Down Like Marines" in the February 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* was particularly interesting, highlighting a piece of Marine history few of us knew the details of. However, just as enlightening to me was the recognition of four rescue pictures I can credit to my uncle, Photographers Mate 1st Class John H. Gerard, USCG, who was the ship photographer for USCGC *Bibb* (WPG-31). John had enlisted as a teenager in the Coast Guard via a vessel in Saint Louis, Mo., which needed a photographer in the late 1930s while patrolling the Mississippi River near his hometown of Alton, Ill. However, with the war-footing needs of the service, he was transferred to New York for convoy escort duty and joined *Bibb* (WPG-31) which was under the command of Commander Roy Raney.

The details of the 1943 convoy work and the ordeal recorded in the *Leatherneck* article was something John often told me about when I was joining the Marine Corps in 1955. *Bibb* (WPG-31) rescued 202 survivors after the attack including Marines. John's photographic work documented much of that effort and he later covered other World War II events in Hawaii and New Orleans, La.

John gave me the bulk of his WW II photo work later in his life. After his death, I arranged to have that work donated to the Coast Guard Museum in New London, Conn., where I assume it resides today. Thus, my pleasure and surprise seeing his work, which I readily recognized, in *Leatherneck*.

LtCol C.G. "Jug" Gerard, USMC (Ret)  
1955 to 1981  
Brevard, N.C.

*We spoke to Geoffrey W. Roecker, the author of the article "Go Down Like Marines," and he wanted us to thank you for your letter. It's good to know the name of the photographer*

*who took the compelling images. We always like to credit writers and photographers for their work.—Editor*

## Sound Off Letter Reminds Reader Of His Drill Instructors

I read Snuffy Jackson's Sound Off letter in the February 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* about using an accent to get through Parris Island training.

My experience was a little different. I loved my drill instructors; they were trying to teach me to survive war. Staff Sergeant Walney, Corporal Walkup, and another whose name escapes me were outstanding Marines. However, my last name was incorrectly spelled. It should have been Crowell, but the C became a G.

I was not a squared away Marine and there was no PFC stripe for outstanding participation.

I often heard, "Private Growl, come to the drill instructor's quarters now!"

I survived and upon graduation was promoted to the rank of Private First Class—not for being squared away, but because I, much to the surprise of my

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## President/CEO, Marine Corps Association

LtGen Charles G. Chiarotti, USMC (Ret)

## Publisher:

Col Christopher Woodbridge, USMC (Ret)

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

**Deputy Editor:** Nancy S. Lichtman

**Staff Writer:** Kyle Watts

**Editorial Assistant**

Briesa Koch

**Art Director:** Jason Monroe

## EDITORIAL OFFICES

Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134

**Phone:** (703) 640-6161, Ext. 115

**Email:** leatherneck@mca-marines.org

**Web page:** www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck

## TELEPHONE EXTENSIONS

Editorial Offices: 115 • Business Office: 121

## ADVERTISING QUERIES:

Contact: Valerie Preletz 703-640-0107 or

LeeAnn Mitchell 703-640-0169

advertising@mca-marines.org

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drill instructors, not only had the highest rifle qualification score for recruits but was also third across the entire region.

From there, I later landed a spot on the USMCR rifle team. I managed to obtain awards at Camp Perry national matches using a beautiful Sgt Sweet built M14 service rifle, shooting 1,000 yards.

Still, I am not a squared away Marine, but I cannot say enough about how important the Marine Corps has been to my survival throughout life.

Terry Crowell  
Georgetown, Ind.

## Stogner's Medal of Honor Was Long Past Due

Regarding the February 2023 article, "A Knife in a Gunfight" on Lance Corporal James Stogner, I am a history buff of sorts and over the years have read numerous accounts of military personnel who were awarded the Medal of Honor. I have seen very few whose exploits come close to what LCpl Stogner did at Phu An with "The Walking Dead." It's a tragedy that it has taken so many years for him to be recognized, even though he finally received the Navy Cross.

But how could the military review board look at what he did, especially with so many firsthand accounts to confirm his actions, and see fit to downgrade the Medal of Honor recommendation? I'm sure Stogner is very appreciative of the subsequent award but he, in my opinion, deserved the Medal of Honor, and it should not have taken so long for him to receive it.

Sgt Larry D. Richey  
USMC, 1960-1964  
Prescott, Ariz.

## Thoughts on Public Law 416

As a Sailor who took it for granted that Marines were partners of the naval service, it was great to read in the December 2022 issue of *Leatherneck* about Michael Mansfield and Public Law 416 in the article "Bury Me A Marine: The Private Who Saved The Marine Corps." How could anyone who knows U.S. history and the battles in war ever consider disbanding the Corps?

I think Harry Truman was a U.S. Army veteran who concluded all future wars would need atomic bombs to win. He forgot you need warriors to fight and hold land after defeating the enemy in battle. Since the Earth is mostly covered by water, you need warships to transport men, supplies and airpower to hold what we defeated in battle.

Thank God we have experienced men and women who know how to lead, fight

and defeat the enemy in war to keep the peace! When I think about our military and remember meeting other Sailors, Marines, Army, Coast Guard and law enforcement, I sleep like a baby knowing they have the watch while the Air Force and Air National Guard watch our skies.

John Sanchez  
USN, 1961-1966  
Hanford, Calif.

## The Gathering of Brothers

I recently came across this writing that I penned in April 1996 and thought I would share it:

Our company, "Lima" Co, 3/3 came from near and far, some by plane and others by car. They hadn't been together since 1990 and 1991, anticipation and excitement in them begun.

The greeting was warm, some hair had been missing, the beer was plentiful, with laughter and reminiscing.

There was Leon and Oddie with Nasty, Starks and Ero, together with Leroy, Sean and Coco.

For those who were there, no other place was as unique, sharing their lives to ponder and stories to critique.

Tales of the Corps both comic and tart, rekindled the bond shared in their heart.

There were stories of Okie, Pataya Beach, Kahukus, and NTA, mixed with thoughts of Herman, Hank, Duke and D.J.

The anecdotes were funny, some had been forgotten, of how these good little boys had grown to be so rotten.

But all was not lost from their stint with Uncle Sam, their country was defended, and they learned to say ma'am.

Their lives are different now with paths leading in every direction, but it's funny how a shared hardship can breed such loyal affection.

They will always be loved and welcomed in others' homes, as long as they remember they will never be alone.

Oohrah, Devil Dogs and long live my Corps, your spirits have lifted me to the place where eagles soar.

I look forward to our next gathering, so until then watch your backs, take care my brothers, and may God bless.

Cpl Scott P. "Phax" Coco  
USMC  
Marksville, La.

## Reader Response: Is It Possible To Be a Marine Without an MOS?

I graduated from MCRD San Diego boot camp Aug. 31, 1955, and was assigned a primary MOS of 9900 Basic Marine. This remained my MOS until I graduated from Radio Telegraph Op-



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erators Course Class 110 at MCRD San Diego on April 16, 1956, at which time my primary MOS became 2533 Radio Telegraph Operator.

William Blond  
Kenmore Mass.

### Sea Story Inspired Me to Reach Out

Page 57 of the January 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* caught my attention. The Sea Story “The LTC Didn’t Appreciate Our Skills” inspired me to write to Doris

Thomas, a friend of the Nike Site Summit at Fort Richardson, Ala. Our site summit has placed parts of a Nike missile on Fort Richardson which is to be assembled this year, so our tours in 2023 will have a missile to exhibit! I have taken tours there since the first regional tours began.

I have also written to Senator Dan Sullivan from Alaska inviting the veteran Marine to take a tour. I have also invited actor Gary Sinise to also visit.

Bruce Downs  
USMC, 1968-1969  
Palmer, Ala.

### In Memoriam: A Necessary Tradition

I received my February 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* magazine today, and I was very surprised (unpleasantly so) that you had omitted the In Memoriam section. Part of earning the title of Marine, to me anyway, involves remembering those Marines who went before us. But how are we supposed to do that if we aren’t notified of their passing?

I thought it was a very unwise decision to leave this section out. It has been a well-established tradition for many years for *Leatherneck* to keep us up to date on the fate of our fellow Marines. I don’t know about anybody else, but I personally think it was a grave error to break with such a long-established tradition.

Carl R. Withey  
USMCR, 1966-1968  
Elbridge, N.Y.

*I agree that we as Marines should remember those who have gone before, and my decision to not include In Memoriam in the February issue was not taken lightly. The decision was made because we simply did not have enough obituaries to run. Like our other popular departments, Sound Off and Sea Stories, we rely on input from our readers to provide content. Our small staff does our best to find Marine obituaries, and we greatly appreciate those readers who send in notices of their loved ones’ deaths.—Editor*

### Ad’s Photo Caught Reader’s Eye

While re-reading the January 2023 issue of *Leatherneck*, something caught my eye that I missed before. On page 55, there is a Marine Shop advertisement with an extremely young looking major wearing an evening dress uniform. Why is he wearing a company grade barracks cover?

Maj Earl W. Hacker, USMC (Ret)  
1967 to 1997  
Blacksburg, Va.

*In short, the wrong cover was used, and I missed it during the editing process. We apologize and definitely won’t make that mistake again.—Editor*

### The “Christmas Truce” Story Didn’t Surprise Me A Bit

I was a battalion surgeon in 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines in Korea and called for a helicopter many times. Winter, spring,



Bruce Downs with close friends at the Nike Missile site in Fort Richardson, Ala.

COURTESY OF BRUCE DOWNS



and summer. Day and night, and only once was I denied an evacuation—a Chinese man with a head wound that was probably fatal whether helicoptered out or not. Inky-black nights in the eastern mountain of hilly rice paddies north of Seoul were not a problem for our Marines!

On one occasion, four corpsmen stood at the four corners of a very tiny bare patch of ground, ready with a flashlight. When we heard the bird, they switched on their lights. When the pilot saw the lights, he switched on a down-pointing light and landed. Loading and take-off was done in the dark.

J. Birney Dibble  
USN, 1943-1953  
Eau Claire, Wis.

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](mailto: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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LTJG MOHAMMAD ISSA, USN

## Singapore 13th MEU Completes Exercise With Singapore Navy

The 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), aboard the *Makin Island* Amphibious Ready Group, completed Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)/Marine Exercise (MAREX) Singapore 2023 in Singapore, Jan. 13. CARAT/MAREX Singapore was conducted ashore at RSS Singapura—Changi Naval Base (CNB) and in the waters off Pulau Sudong, Jan. 9-13.

The exercise consisted of planning a bilateral ship-to-shore movement, wargaming an amphibious assault using a simulation trainer, conducting the ship-to-shore movement, friendly competition during a sports day, and a reception aboard USS *Makin Island* (LHD-8), sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in Singapore.

“CARAT Singapore is one of the ways we demonstrate our shared commitment,” said Rear Admiral Mark Melson, Commander, Logistics Group Western Pacific/Task Force 73. “We do that by maintaining a strong mil-to-mil bilateral relationship, one that is rooted in a shared vision of operating in a rules-based international order.”

**Above: Landing Craft, Utility 1648, assigned to Assault Craft Unit 1, launched from USS *John P. Murtha* (LPD-26) conducts a ship-to-shore exercise on Pulau Sudong as part of Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training/Marine Exercise (CARAT/MAREX) Singapore, Jan. 12.**

**Below: Marines with 13th MEU and Sailors assigned to amphibious assault ship USS *Makin Island* (LHD-8) participate in a tug-of-war competition alongside Republic of Singapore Navy Sailors during the CARAT/MAREX Singapore sports day, Jan. 10.**



CPL CARL MATTHEW RUPPERT, USMC





CPL SEAN POTTER, USMC

**Leathernecks with 3rd Low Altitude Air Defense Battalion, Marine Air Control Group 38, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, conducted the activation ceremony for Charlie Battery at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Nov. 18, 2022. The activation of Charlie Btry increases 3rd MAW's capabilities in ground-based air defense.**

The main event was the planning and execution of the ship-to-shore landing on Sudong Island. One American Landing Craft Utility from USS *John P. Murtha* (LPD-26) and two Singaporean Fast Craft Utilities (FCU's) from an *Endurance*-class landing ship tank RSS *Endurance* (207) conducted a simultaneous landing. Throughout the planning and execution for the ship-to-shore landing, tactics, techniques and procedures were exchanged on how the partner forces conduct ship-to-shore movements.

Prior to executing the landing, the RSN conducted a simulation using their Naval Tactical Trainer. The NTT enables the RSN to rehearse ship-to-shore landings prior to execution. This event further enhanced maritime cooperation between the partner forces and increased mutual understanding of amphibious capabilities.

"One of my favorite things about CARAT/MAREX Singapore was the relationships we developed," said Colonel Samuel L. Meyer, Commanding Officer, 13th MEU. "Singapore feels like a second home after the warm welcome from the Singapore armed forces and people of Singapore. We cherish the bonds we've made and look forward to the next opportunity to work together."

Through events like the sports day, where friendships were formed over dodgeball, tug-of-war, and obstacle courses, Singaporean servicemembers and U.S. Marines and Sailors made last-

ing memories during the exercise.

Now in its 28th year, the CARAT series comprises multinational exercises designed to enhance U.S. and partner navies' abilities to operate together in response to maritime security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region. The 13th MEU embarked on the *Makin Island* Amphibious Ready Group, which includes amphibious assault ship USS *Makin Island* (LHD-8) and amphibious transport dock ships USS *John P. Murtha* (LPD-26) and USS *Anchorage* (LPD-23), operated in the U.S. 7th Fleet area of operations. 7th Fleet is the U.S. Navy's largest forward-deployed numbered fleet and routinely interacts and operates with allies and partners in preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

Capt Kevin Buss, USMC

### **Camp Pendleton, Calif. 3rd MAW Activates New Air Defense Unit**

The 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) activated a new air defense battery on Nov. 18, 2022, as part of its ongoing efforts to modernize existing ground-based air defense capabilities. "Charlie" Battery, as part of 3rd Low Altitude Air Defense (LAAD) Battalion, Marine Air Control Group (MACG) 38, increases 3rd MAW's ground-based air defense weapon systems and capabilities. The activation demonstrates the Marine Corps' investment in growing the

ground-based air defense community.

The unit's activation sets the foundation for the arrival of Marine Air Defense Integrated System (MADIS) Increment 1 to the battalion. This system modernizes the existing ground-based air defense capabilities by mounting a mix of legacy and emerging technologies onto the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle. The new capabilities will help the unit mitigate the threat from unmanned aerial systems, fixed, and rotary-wing aircraft.

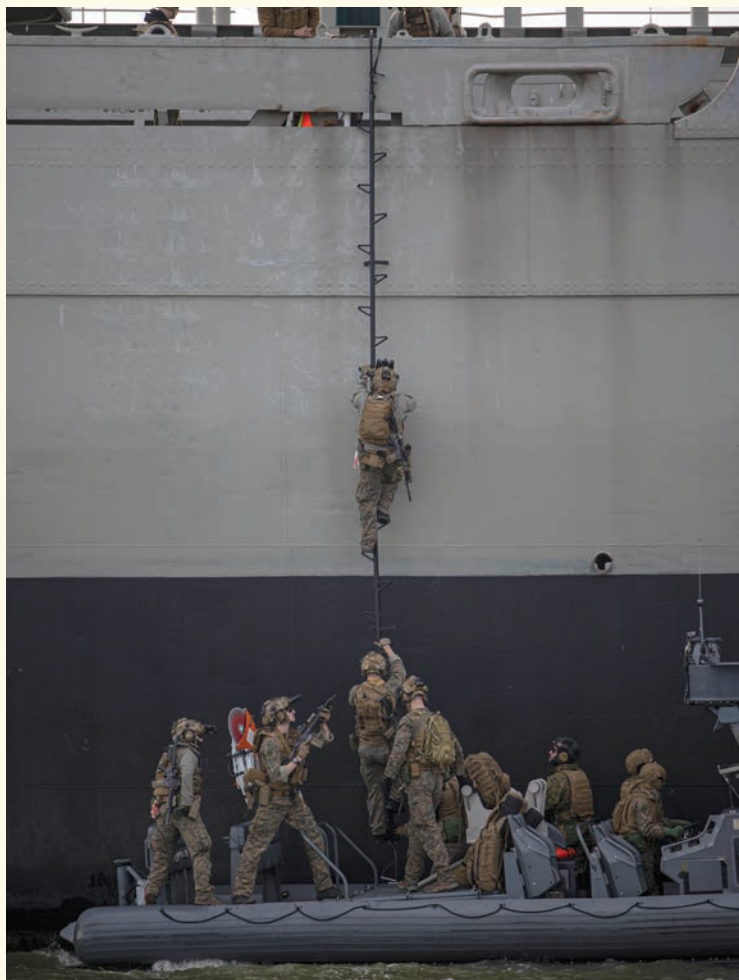
Once fully equipped, the new unit will have the MADIS, FIM-92 Stinger missiles, and a kinetic remote weapon system designed to counter unmanned aerial systems. The remote weapon system, an organic RPS-62 RADAR, provides additional capabilities, including multi-function electronic warfare and significant command and control improvements.

"The Charlie Battery activation is another piece to the pie of modernizing the force to meet future threats," said Maj Crispus M. Kimani, operations officer for 3rd LAAD Bn. "It increases air defense capacity within the Marine Expeditionary Force."

Activating Charlie Btry and integrating new technologies enables 3rd LAAD to detect, track, identify, and defeat aerial threats. Additionally, the new capabilities will enable counter-unmanned aerial systems operations in austere and isolated environments.

2ndLt Andrew Baez, USMC





CPL MATTHEW ROMONOSKE-BEAN, USMC

**Above: Marines with the Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF), 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), climb a caving ladder during a Visit, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) course at Fort Eustis, Va., Jan. 12. The VBSS course is designed to train the MSPF and supporting elements across the Marine Air Ground Task Force to conduct Maritime Interception Operations in preparation for the Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit deployment.**



CPL MATTHEW ROMONOSKE-BEAN, USMC

**Above: The 26th MEU conducts Boat Assault Force (BAF) Operations at Fort Eustis, Va., Jan. 12, 2023. Marines with the Maritime Special Purpose Force and Battalion Landing Team 1/6 conducted BAF operations to further advance their qualifications to conduct VBSS operations during the upcoming deployment with the 26th MEU.**

**Left: A leatherneck with the Maritime Special Purpose Force, 26th MEU, establishes security after conducting fast-rope familiarization training during a VBSS course at Fort Eustis, Va., Jan. 11.**



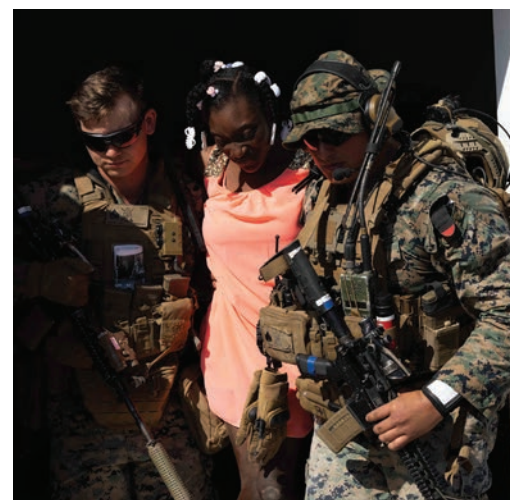


CPL MATTHEW ROMONOSKE-BEAN, USMC



CPL MATTHEW ROMONOSKE-BEAN, USMC

**Maritime Special Purpose Force, 26th MEU, establishes security during night operations of a VBSS course at Fort Eustis, Va., Jan. 13. The VBSS course is designed by the Expeditionary Operations Training Group.**



**While supporting Continuing Promise 2022 in Jeremie, Haiti, Marines from 1st Bn, 8th Marines, help a local civilian to a treatment site, Dec. 12, 2022. (Photo by LCpl Ryan Ramsammy, USMC)**

## Haiti

### 2ndMarDiv Marines Participate in Continuing Promise 2022

Marines from 2nd Marine Division deployed in December 2022 in support of Continuing Promise 2022, providing humanitarian assistance to our partner nations in the Caribbean, Central and South America.

Approximately 90 Marines from 1st Battalion 8th Marine Regiment provided additional security in Haiti during the deployment. The Continuing Promise 2022 mission included medical and veterinary care, training and subject matter expert exchanges on various medical and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief topics, and leading seminars on women, peace and security. Continuing Promise 2022 previously conducted mission stops in Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Honduras. The Marines of 2ndMarDiv joined this deployment for the fifth and final stop in Haiti.

As they supported Continuing Promise 2022, Marines from 1/8 helped set up medical treatment sites, provided security and screening assistance alongside the Haitian National Police and other host-nation personnel, and helped escort patients to designated facilities for appropriate care.

“First Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment’s ability to deploy Marines in support of Continuing Promise 2022 is an outstanding example of how the 2nd Marine Division remained ready for operations worldwide,” said Brigadier General Calvert Worth, Commanding General, 2ndMarDiv. “On short notice, 1/8 seamlessly integrated into U.S. 4th Fleet to participate in this humanitarian civic





LCPL RYAN RAMSAMMY, USMC

**LCpl Moriah Hollander, a mortarman with 1st Bn, 8th Marines, screens patients during Continuing Promise 2022 in Jeremie, Haiti, Dec. 12, 2022.**



LCPL RYAN RAMSAMMY, USMC

**1stLt Dalton Hughey, a platoon commander with 1st Bn, 8th Marines, carries a patient during Continuing Promise 2022 in Jeremie, Haiti, Dec. 16, 2022.**

assistance mission. It is their continuous preparation for worldwide deployments through rigorous training and engaged leadership that made this possible.”

As a unique highlight to the deployment, one Marine, who is a Haitian native, reunited with his family still living on the island. On Dec. 2, 2022, 1/8 conducted a naturalization ceremony aboard the battleship, USS *North Carolina* (BB-55). Eighteen Marines from 14 different countries were naturalized that day, making it one of the largest naturalization ceremonies ever for a Marine infantry battalion. Four days after this historic ceremony, one of the new U.S. citizens, PFC Johvany Moize, prepared to deploy aboard USNS *Comfort* (T-AH 20), to provide humanitarian relief to Haiti, the same country where he was born and raised. Moize, a 19-year-old machine gunner with 1/8, grew up in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, the capital city that sits on the Gulf of Gonave.

“Seeing my community and helping them was a great feeling,” PFC Moize said. “I wanted to do everything to help them; give them food, water, everything possible. I even worked outside of my duties to make sure they were taken care of.”

During this humanitarian mission, Moize was a vital asset in its success as he provided security and cleared the pier each morning of any potential threats to the immediate area. He also acted as a liaison between the Haitian National

Police and the Marine Corps, helping translate between both forces to assist patients who were trying to receive medical help.

For as long as he could remember, Moize wanted to become a United States Marine. He recalled the positive impact Marines had in his childhood when a devastating 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck his hometown in Haiti, claiming



LCPL RYAN RAMSAMMY, USMC

**Pfc Johvany Moize, a machine-gunner with 1st Bn, 8th Marines, reunited with his father during Continuing Promise 2022 in Jeremie, Haiti, Dec. 14, 2022. “[Being naturalized] was a good feeling,” said Moize. “It didn’t feel real to me that I was an actual citizen. To come from Haiti and go to the United States and you become a citizen, that’s a big thing. That’s something you should be proud of for your whole life.”**

the lives of more than 220,000 people, and injuring many more. The earthquake left Haitians in desperate need of food, water and shelter as the fragile infrastructure was destroyed and turned into rubble.

“It was around 2010 there was a big earthquake, and after the earthquake the Marines came,” recalled Moize. “They gave us food and water, and helicopters came and gave us MREs. I saw that as an inspiration, I wanted to help people too. When I came to America one of my dreams was to become a Marine because of what they did for us when I was in Haiti.”

Moize’s experience as a Marine came full circle when he reunited with his father during his deployment to Haiti during Continuing Promise 22.

“The last time I saw my dad was seven years ago,” said Moize. “I didn’t get to see him the day I left [Haiti].”

As a result of the historic naturalization in December, Moize was able to give back to his community while embracing his legacy as a United States Marine. His unique story is one of many Marines who immigrate to the United States in search of better opportunities.

“I still can’t believe it. It feels like I’m dreaming. I feel proud of myself. My dad is proud of me, and my country is proud of me.”

Compiled from a story by  
Sgt Alexa Hernandez, USMC  
and a 2ndMarDiv Press Release





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## Winston-Salem, N.C.



### MCL Detachment Holds Record-Setting Toys for Tots Campaign

On Oct. 1, 2022, the Forsyth County, N.C., Toys for Tots campaign began operations. On Dec. 22, 2022, when the campaign ended, 75,280 toys had been collected—a 38.9 percent increase from 2021—and distributed them to some of the needy children in the Forsyth County area.

Staff members and other volunteers from the Percy John Fulton Detachment No. 1075 of the Marine Corps League helped receive, sort and organize the toys. The Forsyth County Sheriff's Office and Winston-Salem Police Department assisted in the distribution of the toys.



COURTESY OF WARREN BOYER

This year's Toys for Tots campaign was a resounding success because of the many organizations and hundreds of people that purchased and placed toys in the many Toys for Tots boxes that were distributed around the Forsyth County area.

Submitted by Warren Boyer

## Tacoma, Wash.

### World War II Raider Receives High Martial Arts Honor

On Nov. 10, 2022, World War II veteran Charles Meacham was awarded the rank of Ju-dan (10th degree black belt) and the title of O'Sensei (Great Teacher) in the art of Umibushi Goshin Jutsu, presented by the North American Self Defense Association.

A native of Gig Harbor, Wash., 97-year-old Meacham was assigned to the 3rd Raider Battalion for two years during WW II. He enlisted at the age of 17 following in his family tradition of military service. His older brother had already left for service in the war by the time Meacham enlisted, and both his mother and father had served overseas during WW I. He was a Browning Automatic Rifleman with the Raiders and took part in landings on Emirau, Guam, Okinawa and Bougainville.



COURTESY OF JIM CURTIS



COURTESY OF JIM CURTIS

Meacham helped form the U.S. Marine Raider Foundation and was the organization's president for a time, and now serves as a member of the executive committee. Meacham's son, Charles Meacham Jr., is the current president of the foundation.

Submitted by Jim Curtis



## Washington, D.C.

### Marine Astronaut Receives Congressional Space Medal of Honor

On Jan. 30, 2023, Vice President Kamala Harris, center, awarded former NASA astronauts Douglas Hurley, right, and Robert Behnken, left, the Congressional Space Medal of Honor for their bravery in NASA's SpaceX Demonstration Mission-2 (Demo-2) to the International Space Station in 2020. Hurley and Behnken are the first recipients of the honor since 2006.

On May 30, 2020, a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket carrying the company's Crew Dragon spacecraft lifted off to the space station, marking the first mission to launch with astronauts as part of NASA's Commercial Crew Program Demo-2. A mission more than a decade in the making, Demo-2 was the first time American astronauts had launched from American soil on an American rocket since the conclusion of the Space Shuttle Program in 2011.

Hurley (right) served as a pilot in the Marine Corps, receiving his commission in 1988. He flew F/A-18s and eventually became a naval test pilot prior to his selection to the astronaut program in 2000. He retired from the Marine Corps as colonel after 24 years of service. With NASA, Hurley served aboard three spaceflights, including his role as spacecraft commander on the mission for which he received the medal. He spent a total of 93 days in space.

"Bob and Doug, together, have written the first page of a new chapter in the history of American spaceflight," said Harris, who chairs the National Space Council. "Bob and Doug represent the best of our nation—there's no question about it. The courage; the commitment; the brilliance; the vision; the ability to see and understand what is possible and then to go for it, represents the best of who we are as a nation."

The Congressional Space Medal of Honor was authorized by Congress in 1969 to recognize astronauts who in the performance of their duties have distinguished themselves by exceptionally meritorious efforts and contributions to the welfare of the nation and humanity. The honor now has been awarded to 30 people, including the crews of the Apollo 1, *Challenger*, and *Columbia* disasters who received the award posthumously.

"The American story is about innovation, exploration, and pioneers who forge ahead. Doug Hurley and Bob Behnken



NASA



NASA

represent the American story," said NASA Administrator Bill Nelson. "When Doug and Bob launched into history, a new era of human spaceflight took flight. The Demo-2 mission showcased American leadership and technological ingenuity and inspired countless minds to dare to dream to fly among the stars. Congratulations to Doug and Bob on this well-deserved honor!"

NASA

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



During recruit training in 2004, female recruits practice hand-to-hand combat movements as part of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program. (USMC photo)



# The 80 Year History of Women Marines at Parris Island

By CWO-3 Bobby Yarbrough, USMC

**W**omen have worked and trained at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island since 1943. For the past 80 years, the Marine Corps has used the depot and recruit training as the foundation to define the roles and responsibilities for servicewomen. As the Marine Corps prepares for 21st-century warfare, the roles of women in uniform have become indistinguishable from men—and so has their training.

## Women in World War I

In 1917, the United States ultimately decided to join the Allied Powers and fight in World War I. Men from across the nation swiftly volunteered for military

duty. High casualties in Europe led to a shortage of battle-ready Marines to serve at the war front in France. The 12th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General George Barnett, requested a study to determine how many jobs within the Marine Corps could be performed by women. The estimates concluded about 40 percent of jobs within the Marine Corps at the time could be performed by women.

As a result, in August of 1918, the Department of the Navy approved the Marine Corps' request to allow women to enroll as reservists for clerical services. Opha May Johnson, who was already working at the Marine Corps' headquar-

ters through the civil service program, became the first woman Marine reservist on Aug. 12, 1918. Over the next year, 305 women enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve with many serving as clerks at the service headquarters in Washington D.C., at recruiting stations across the country, and at the Marine Corps Publicity Bureau.

Following the armistice to end World War I, the Commandant issued an order on Aug. 11, 1919, to move all women Marines to inactive status. Although women served as Marines for only a brief time during the war, their service would pave the way for women during World War II.





COURTESY OF PARRIS ISLAND MUSEUM



COURTESY OF PARRIS ISLAND MUSEUM



SGT DANA BEESLEY, USMC

**Top left: Female Marines in 1969 prepare for boot camp graduation.**

**Above: Marines hone their marksmanship skills during training at the MCRD Parris Island range.**

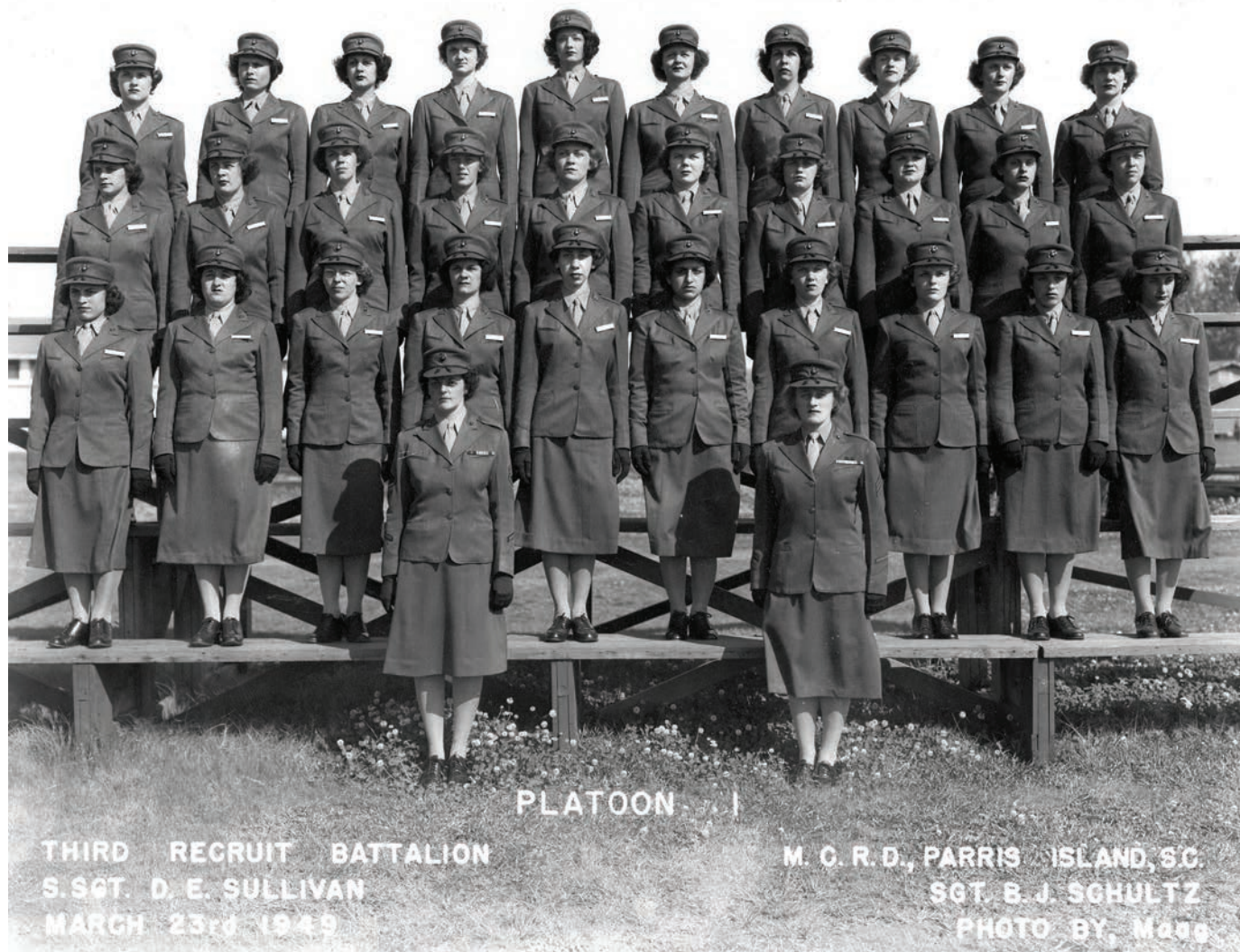
**Left: A recruit with November Co, 4th RTB, listens to a Medal of Honor citation being read between events during The Crucible on Parris Island, S.C. Feb. 22, 2019. The Crucible is a 54-hour culminating event that requires recruits to overcome challenges as a team to earn the title U.S. Marine.**



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

**Members of the Parris Island Drum and Bugle Corps show Cpl Martha Wilchinski how to execute a drum roll during a visit to the Marine barracks in 1918. Wilchinski was the first Woman Marine to visit Parris Island.**





COURTESY OF PARRIS ISLAND MUSEUM

A photo of 3rd Recruit Training Bn's, first female platoon to graduate from MCRD Parris Island, S.C., in 1949.

## Training Women During World War II

On Dec. 7, 1941, the bombing of Pearl Harbor propelled the U.S. into World War II. Two years later, there was again a shortage of combat troops to support the needs of the Marine Corps. In response, the service began enlisting women and established the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in 1943. That year, more than 19,000 women joined the Marine Corps.

For their training, women attended a six-week bootcamp at Hadnot Point aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. Colonel Ruth Streeter, who had been selected to lead the Women's Reserve, insisted women should be trained like men and learn hand-to-hand combat, weapons systems, and close order drill. The female recruits were taught by 18 male drill instructors from Parris Island. Following boot camp, women would be assigned an occupational specialty. Society at the time considered only certain jobs suitable for women and in the Marine Corps only 30 job fields were initially

opened to women with many revolving around administrative work in offices, classrooms, hospitals and libraries.

Parris Island was one of the seven bases on the East Coast where women could be stationed. By 1944, more than 600 women were on duty at Parris Island. Many of the jobs filled by women aboard the base included clerical work; they served at the commanding general's building, the paymaster's office, and in the recruit depot headquarters. However, as the war continued and women proved themselves capable of performing military jobs, women would be assigned as mechanics, drivers and even welders. Of the women assigned to Parris Island, more than 200 women worked at Marine Corps Air Station Page Field as part of the Aviation Women's Squadron II. These women served as air traffic controllers, guiding takeoffs and landings, and reading weather and flight data.

Due to the high number of women assigned to Parris Island, the base constructed 13 buildings in 1944 to support

the Women Reserves which included barracks, office spaces, a chow hall, and a recreational building. These facilities were separate from the male facilities to provide areas of privacy for women Marines.

Throughout the war more than 1,000 women were stationed at Parris Island and women would be assigned to 225 job specialties in 16 of the 21 functional fields of the Marine Corps. However, the Women Reserves was demobilized in 1945 with all women at Parris Island being discharged by the following year.

## Establishing the Women Marines and Recruit Training

At the end of World War II, women's role in the military was seen as temporary. However, military leaders, most notably General Dwight D. Eisenhower, saw the benefit of women having permanent roles within the military should the U.S. need to mobilize for war in the future. In 1948, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was signed by President Harry S.





**Left: A male drill instructor stands in front of a group of female recruits and teaches Marine Corps customs and courtesies during recruit training at Parris Island.**

Truman, which provided a separate women's corps within each branch of the military.

The Marine Corps' goal initially was to enlist 830 women in the regular Marine Corps from members and former members of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. Due to a low number of applicants, however, the Marine Corps opened enlistment to non-veteran women to meet their enlistment goal. To train the enlisted women, the Marine Corps established 3rd Battalion at Parris Island and recruit training for women aboard the base began March 1, 1949.

Approximately 150 women arrived every three-and-a-half weeks for boot camp, which consisted of a total of 264 hours of training. At the time, women and men received relatively the same training except women received additional hygiene courses and did not have combat training.

Male drill instructors taught the women close order drill, first aid, chemical warfare, and general military subjects. In addition, women would witness mortar instruction on the range to become familiar with the sound of gunfire.

### **The 1950s and 1960s**

The beginning of the Korean War in 1950 increased the need for women to replace men for combat billets. The Marine Corps, along with the other services, increased their recruitment goals for women to join the military.

The duration of boot camp at Parris Island increased throughout the 1950s



**Above: Female recruits participate in a physical a fitness workout at MCRD Parris Island.**

**Below: In 1944, women drivers and mechanics staffed the Motor Transportation Section at Parris Island.**







**A drill instructor with Papa Co, 4th Recruit Training Bn, prepares to meet her new recruits on pick up day, Dec. 2, 2022. On pick up day, DIs teach recruits the rules and expectation of boot camp.**

from six weeks to 10 weeks. A new four-week General Office Procedures Course was added to the curriculum for women to prepare them with the necessary clerical background for their assigned jobs. Additionally, a physical fitness program was tested to improve the general physical condition of women.

Training beyond boot camp became available to Women Marines in occupations such as Naval Justice, Control Tower, and Disbursing. Schools such as Marine Corps Amphibious School and Command and Staff College were also available to female officers. Additionally, overseas assignments increased for women allowing them to be stationed in countries like Japan, Panama, and the Philippines following recruit training.

### **The 1970s: A Whirlwind of Change**

Societal changes of the 1960s, especially the women's rights movement, challenged the military to modernize and change their approach to the employment of servicewomen. The U.S. military had sent large numbers of troops to fight in the Vietnam War, and the anti-war, anti-establishment attitude of the late 1960s and 1970s caused manpower shortages across the military. In response to competition resulting from increased opportunities for women in the private sector, the military offered expanded roles for women to meet military quotas.

In 1967, the Marshall Commission removed the policy that limited women to only 2 percent of the Armed Forces and restricted promotions. Draft calls were slowly reduced, and the military turned to women to compensate for the projected shortfall of male recruits.

The Marine Corps disbanded the Women Marine Program in 1977 and eliminated the separate command structures to allow for women to be further integrated within the Marine Corps. In 1978, the 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Louis H. Wilson Jr., mandated that all regulations differentiating men and women should have a valid and rational purpose. This applied to recruiting standards, which had set a higher standard for women in terms of education level, mental aptitude, and physical standards.

The 1970s saw immense change for women in recruit training. In 1973, the Marine Corps implemented a new train-



**Female recruits arrive at Parris Island for boot camp in 1975.**

LCPL BLAKE GONTER, USMC

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**Right: While completing boot camp at MCRD Parris Island, two female recruits practice land navigation, circa 1980. (Photo courtesy of the Parris Island Museum)**

**Below: A group of female recruits maneuver over obstacles as part of Basic Warrior training during boot camp at Parris Island in the late 1980s. (Photo courtesy of Parris Island Museum)**





ing syllabus for female recruits that placed an increased emphasis on academics. Additionally, physical fitness training became required for all Women Marines. A physical fitness test was developed which included a 1 ½-mile run, sit-ups, and a flexed arm hang.

As the military shifted to an all-volunteer force, even more job opportunities were opened to women which caused the number of women in the enlisted ranks to balloon. To accommodate the increased number of females, the Marine Corps built a Women Marine Complex at Parris Island in 1973 to support the training for new recruits.

In 1976, the first female drill instructors graduated Drill Instructor School at Parris Island. This was a vital advancement because for the first time, female drill instructors began independently supervising and training female recruits. By the end of the 1970s, Women Marines made up 1.8 percent, or 3,528, of a total of 196,000 personnel in the Marine Corps.

### The 1980s

The 1983 bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, highlighted the ever-increasing threat of terrorism and irregular warfare. In response, the



**During a uniform inspection aboard MCRD Parris Island, female recruits are inspected by their company commander.**

28th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Paul X. Kelley, issued an order in May 1985 that women “must be trained in defensive combat techniques and operations in the event of unforeseen hostile activity.”

As a result, women recruits began

qualifying with the M16A2 service rifle during recruit training at Parris Island. Additionally, women received Basic Warrior Training covering lessons in cover and concealment, gas chamber training, throwing live grenades, and helicopter embarkation. This training provided the



**These female Marines stand at attention during a graduation ceremony aboard MCRD Parris Island in the 1980s.**



basic rifleman skills needed to operate in a hostile environment. Additional requirements to include negotiating the obstacle course and bayonet training would be added as graduation requirements for women Marines by the late 1980s.

In 1986, the Women Marines Recruit Training Battalion was disbanded to create 4th Recruit Training Battalion under the Recruit Training Regiment, which resulted in a single chain of command for recruit training. As a result, all recruits regardless of gender received the same training program of instruction and were required to complete the same graduation events to earn the title U.S. Marine.

### The 1990s and the Crucible

During the 1990s, training curriculums between men and women were mirrored, however, male and female companies trained separately. By 1996, the Marine Corps was at an institutional crossroad. Gen Charles Krulak, the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, believed

the Marine Corps needed to reinforce the organization's core values of honor, courage, and commitment. He knew emphasizing values-based training and application of our time proven leadership traits and principles was foundational to the Marines Corps' continued success in winning our nation's battles.



SGT TYLER HLAVAC - USMC

**Above: Recruits with India Co, 3rd RTB, practice escaping headlocks during a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program training session Dec. 30, 2019, at MCRD Parris Island.**



**November Co participated in the Crucible on Parris Island, S.C., Aug. 1, 2019. The Crucible tests recruits mentally and physically, and it is the final step before earning the title of U.S. Marine.**

SGT DANA BEESLEY, USMC



Gen Krulak wanted a defining moment in boot camp—a “gut check”— a final test that required physical stamina and one that would bond all Marines. He named this event the Crucible, a 54-hour training event that would be a trial by fire for all recruits. To accommodate the Crucible, recruit training was extended to 12 weeks. The incorporation of the Crucible also resulted in female Marines transitioning to Camp Geiger for Marine Combat Training following recruit graduation.

To this day, the Crucible remains the culminating event for all Marines at recruit training.

### The 21st Century

The long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq caused the U.S. military to re-evaluate the closure of combat arms job fields to female service members. In 2015, Secretary of Defense Ash Carter ordered all military occupations and positions open to women. This order enabled women Marines to enlist in job fields to include infantry, reconnaissance, and artillery. This change required training to become integrated for men and women, particularly at the School of Infantry.

In 2019, the Marine Corps tested and graduated the first gender integrated

company at Parris Island. The company graduated one platoon of female Marines and five platoons of male Marines. This was the first time in Marine Corps history males and females had graduated within the same recruit training company.

In the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act, lawmakers mandated that the Marine Corps integrate all training for men and women at both Parris Island and Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. Additional integrated companies were gradually added, and the Marine Corps has continued to increase the number of gender integrated companies in recruit training each year at Parris Island. Presently, men and women are training together in all battalions at Parris Island.

To meet the Congressional Mandate, the Marine Corps has also begun to permanently assign female drill instructors to San Diego to enable integrated training, with the first gender integrated company graduating in 2021. Additional integrated companies are being added and each depot will train 50 percent of the enlisted females, with those east of the Mississippi going to Parris Island, and those in the west going to San Diego. These female Marines will also train at the respective coast’s School of Infantry after recruit training.

### The Future

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen David H. Berger, believes current and future threats call for a significantly more capable force. In his vision for Force Design 2030, Berger is redesigning the Corps to ensure Marines maintain a competitive warfighting advantage against any potential adversary.

According to Berger, training and education will lay the foundation and set the pace for force development. “Rigorous standards will continue to form the foundation for all training,” said Berger. “We will continue to build upon the legacy of the generations of Marines who came before us, holding fast to our immutable high standards as we make and develop new generations of Marines.”

*Author’s bio: CWO-3 Bobby J. Yarbrough is the Visual Information Officer for Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island. He has served as a combat correspondent during his enlisted career and has previously been awarded Leatherneck’s Master Sergeant Tom Bartlett Award and the Marine Corps’ Communicator of the Year.* 🇺🇸

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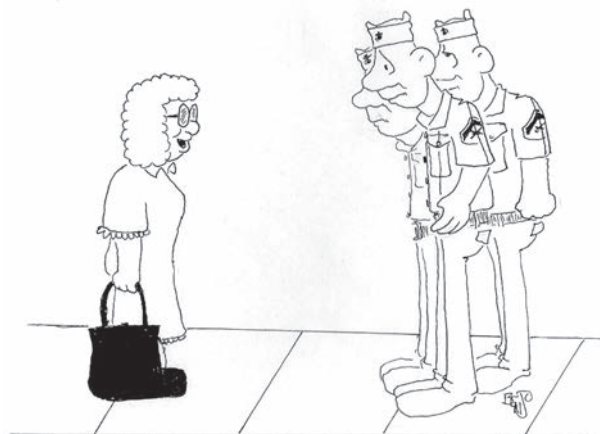




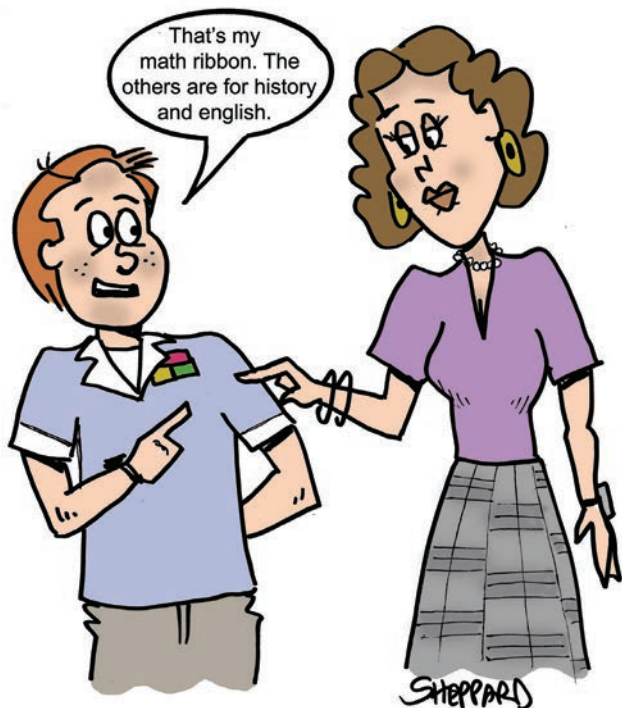
# Leatherneck Laffs



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"Well, if you boys are from Camp Pendleton  
you must know my grandson, Bobby Smith.  
You know, 'Little Bobby.'"



Military brat transfers from base school to public school

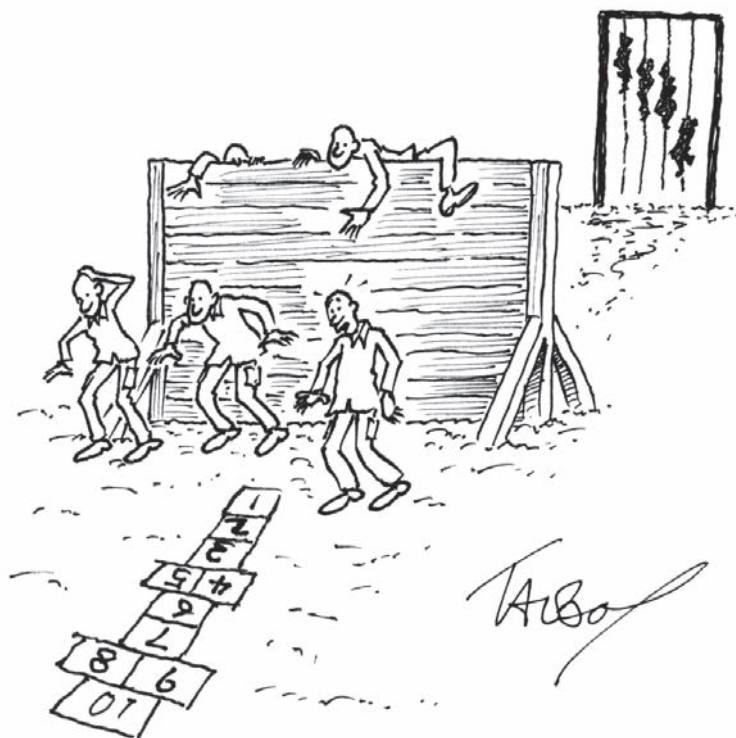


"Why don't we call everything even  
if I drop and give you 50?"





"MRE ... 'Mine Rivals Everybody's.'"



"Hopscotch? This course just gets harder and harder!"

"Nothing personal, Lieutenant, but you'll be reporting for embassy guard duty in South Sudan in three weeks. Questions? Comments?"

"Tell your daughter I'll write."



"It's not all bad, Gunny. My marching went viral as a fail video."



# A Founding Reservist

## First Sergeant Lawrence F. “Jim” Corbett, USMCR Tough as Nails Marine NCO Also Had a Softer Side



COURTESY OF CORBETT FAMILY

**1stSgt Corbett was among the first active-duty Marines to enlist in the Marine Corps Reserve. He is pictured, above right, later in his career, with fellow Marines at a public event.**

By: GySgt Brian A. Knowles  
USMCR (Ret)

First Sergeant Lawrence F. “Jim” Corbett was among the first Marine Reservists when he transferred from active service on Sept. 14, 1916, to the newly created Marine Corps Reserve. He was known by his colleagues as one of “the toughest sergeants in the service.” During his time with the Marine Corps Reserve, he served as a drill instructor at the Boston Navy Yard and at the Belmar, N.J., Naval Radio Station. The American entry into World War I saw a great expansion of the Marine Corps; as its ranks increased in size, experienced Marines, especially NCOs, were needed to assist with the mobilization efforts and the training of new recruits. Corbett’s contributions to the American war effort as a DI marked the twilight tour of a long, successful career as a Marine.

Jim Corbett was born on March 1, 1874, in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Boston, Mass., to Irish immigrants John

and Mary Louise Corbett. According to his service record, Corbett served as a laborer before enlisting in the Marine Corps on Aug. 11, 1896, at the age of 22. This would be the start of more than 25 years of dedicated service to the Corps. His first assignment was at the Boston Navy Yard, where he immediately made a good impression upon his superiors.

During his first year at the Navy Yard, he received high proficiency marks from his commanding officer, Major Robert L. Meade. Meade likely knew a good Marine when he saw one. Meade was one of the longest serving Marine officers of the era, participating in every American conflict from the Civil War through the Boxer Rebellion, and he eventually attained the rank of brevet brigadier general.

Corbett’s next assignment was with the Marine detachment aboard the battleship USS *Massachusetts* (BB-2). During this tour of duty, Corbett saw action during the Spanish-American War as part of the naval squadron

blockading Santiago Harbor and participated in the bombardment of that city. On the morning of July 3, 1898, *Massachusetts* temporarily retired from the blockade to resupply at Guantanamo Bay. Unfortunately, this resulted in the crew of *Massachusetts* missing the decisive Battle of Santiago de Cuba, which occurred later that day when the Spanish squadron attempted to break out of the harbor. The U.S. Navy won a major victory, destroying the Spanish battlefleet, despite *Massachusetts*’ absence.

After returning to Santiago Harbor the following day, Corbett and *Massachusetts* took part in the action against the Spanish cruiser *Reina Mercedes*. Since *Reina Mercedes* had been heavily damaged during the American bombardment of the city and harbor, she did not attempt to break out with the rest of the Spanish fleet on July 3. Instead, her crew waited until the following day to attempt to scuttle her and block the entrance to Santiago Harbor.

In the ensuing action, *Massachusetts* spotted the approaching Spanish warship, opened fire, and scored several hits. Despite this, the crew of *Reina Mercedes* succeeded in scuttling their ship although the decisive action taken by *Massachusetts* helped prevent the Spanish cruiser from effectively blocking the harbor. The U.S. later recovered the sunken vessel and recommissioned her as USS *Reina Mercedes*.

After the Spanish-American War, Corbett continued to advance in rank, earning a promotion to corporal on Oct. 20, 1900, and to sergeant on Dec. 16, 1901. He went on to serve in various ship and shore duties, as well as overseas duties in the Philippines (1903-1905; 1906-1909) and Panama (1909-1910).

On July 6, 1912, while serving aboard one of the most modern battleships of that era, USS *Utah* (BB-31), Sgt Corbett was cited for gallantry by the Acting Secretary of the Navy for actions taken in saving the life of a Sailor who had fallen into the water off the dock at Belfast, Maine. As other shipmates jumped





COURTESY OF NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

During the Spanish-American War, 1stSgt Corbett saw action while aboard USS *Massachusetts* (BB-2) which was a part of the naval squadron blockading Santiago Harbor.

into the water to prevent the drowning Sailor from being swept away, Corbett assisted the rescue effort by lowering himself off the dock and using his field coat to retrieve the man. The actions of Sgt Corbett and the other Sailors were highly inspirational to the ship's crew and the young midshipmen who had joined the ship a few weeks prior.

With Sgt Corbett aboard, *Utah* began 1914 by departing New York and heading to Cuba for torpedo and gunnery practice. Corbett attained expert gunnery status on *Utah*'s 3-inch naval armament. Due to rising tensions with Mexico, *Utah* and most of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet were directed to Vera Cruz, Mexico. The ship operated off the port in support of blockade patrols. By April, *Utah* was sent to Tampico, Mexico, to transport several

hundred refugees to safety. The Marines of the ship's guard were employed tending to the refugees and maintaining security of the ship with so many civilians crowded aboard until they were out of harm's way in Tampico. That there were no injuries or incidents with the refugees speaks to the discipline and training that Corbett and his Marines rendered.

Blockade patrols increased as word of a German steamship, SS *Ypiranga*, was directed by Imperial Germany to deliver arms and ammunition to Vera Cruz. The arms were to support Mexican revolutionaries who were hostile to the U.S., thus keeping the U.S. concerned with its southern border and out of the war in Europe. *Utah* was tasked to search for *Ypiranga* and intercept the arms shipment. Unable to locate the ship and fear-

**Corbett served as a laborer before enlisting in the Marine Corps on Aug. 11, 1896, at the age of 22. This would be the start of more than 25 years of dedicated service to the Corps.**

...ing signalman,  
Excellent. Instructor of Recruits.  
Interesting apt. preserves perfect discipline, and is widely informed about his profession.  
Expert 3" Bore-sighter; T.S. June 8. D. D. May  
Very good.

Above: A performance evaluation of 1stSgt Corbett provides a detailed description of his character while serving in the Corps. (USMC)

Right: Friends, family and fellow Marines referred to 1stSgt Corbett, center, as "handle-bar Corbett" for his well-groomed mustache.



COURTESY OF CORBETT FAMILY

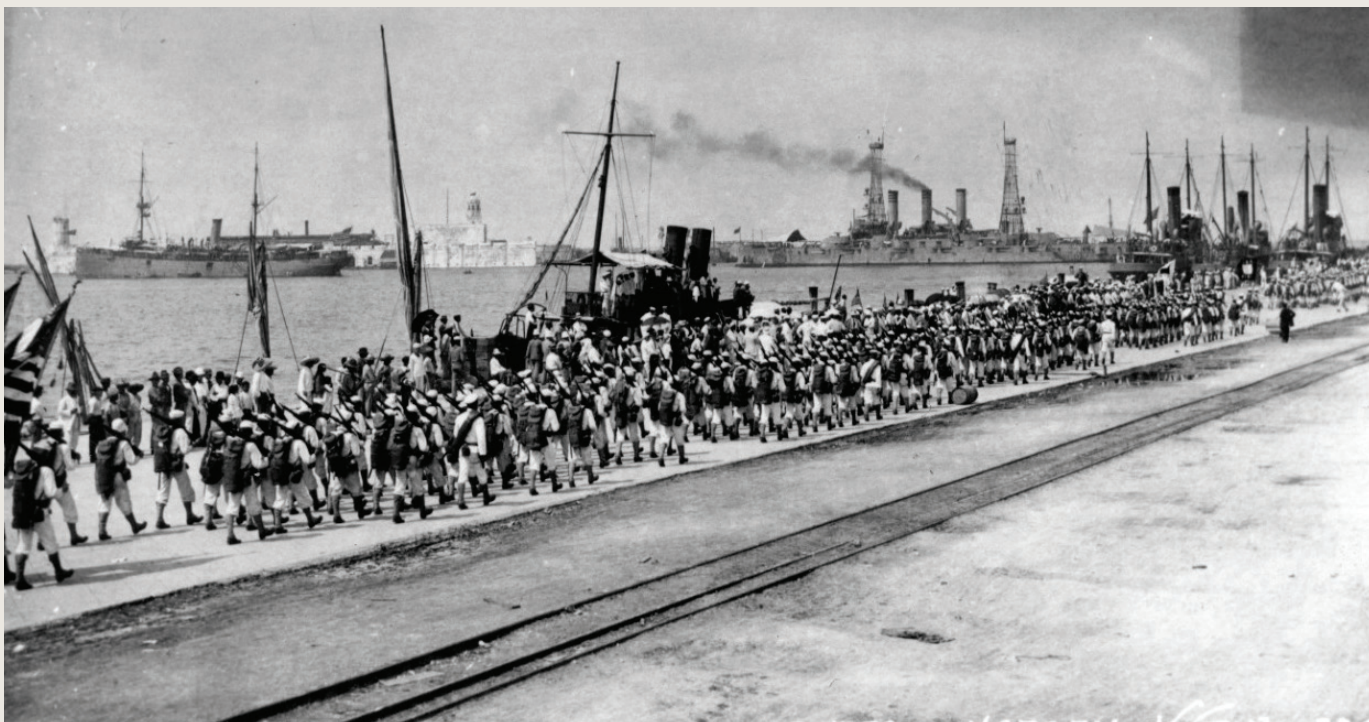


**USS *Utah* (BB-31) underway on Dec. 10, 1936, while serving as a target ship.**



USN

**Corbett's tour of duty came to end in early 1917, when he returned to the Boston Navy Yard before transferring to the newly created Marine Corps Reserve.**



COURTESY OF NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

**The USS *Utah* "blue jacket battalion" marches along the Vera Cruz waterfront while returning to their ship, circa April-June 1914.**



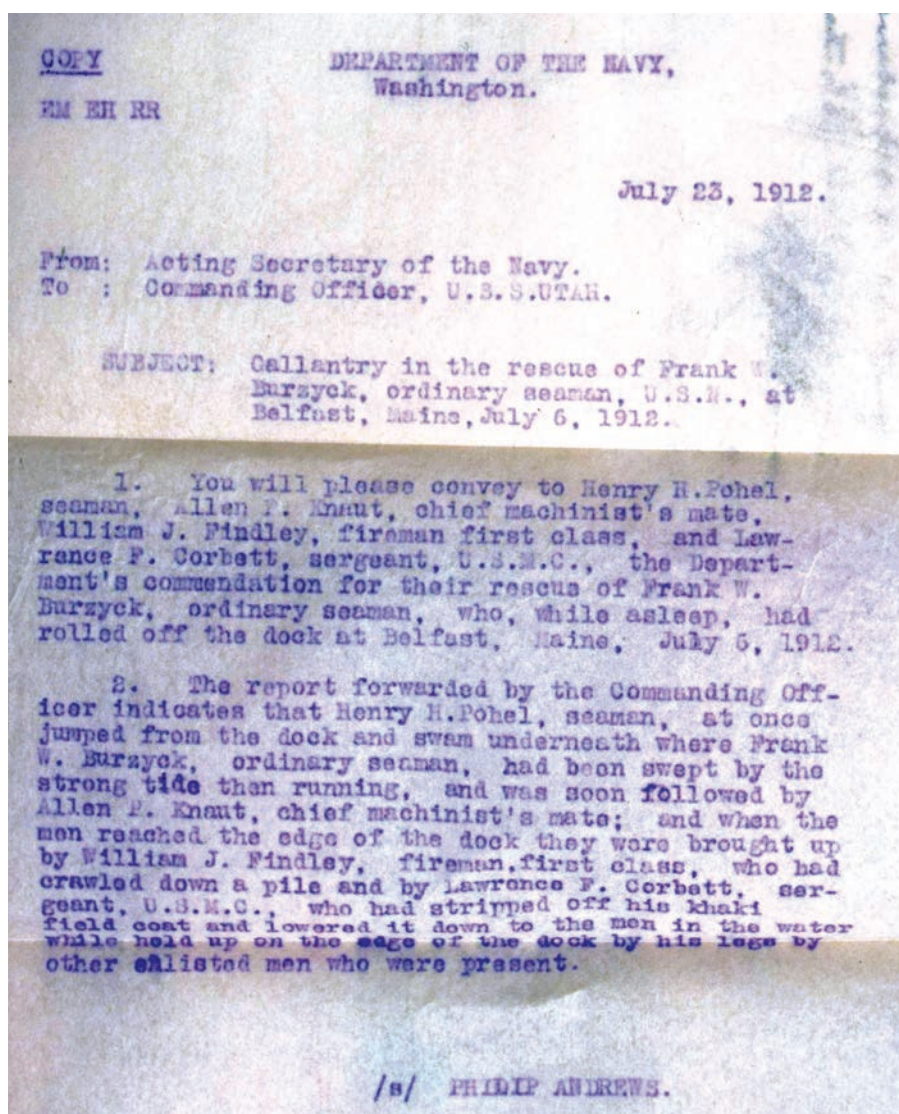
ful the weapons could be landed at Vera Cruz; President Woodrow Wilson ordered the Marines of the Provisional Marine Brigade to capture the city to prevent weapons shipment deliveries to rebels or other banditos.

Sergeant Corbett and the 17 officers and 366 enlisted Marines and Sailors of *Utah's* landing battalion participated in the attack. Ship's guard detachments from across the fleet were landed directly into the city and encountered heavy resistance in securing key areas. Of *Utah's* "bluejacket battalion," seven men were awarded Medals of Honor for distinguished actions in the sharp fighting. American determination prevailed. Vera Cruz was captured, weapons and ammunition were destroyed, and a legitimate Mexican government was able to reestablish order throughout most of the country. *Utah* and her landing party stayed at Vera Cruz for two more months, then departed for New York and an overhaul.

On Sept. 24, 1915, while serving in the USS *Rhode Island* (BB-17), Corbett was promoted to the rank of first sergeant. As the senior staff NCO of the ship's guard, Corbett set the example of high performance and responsibility. Aboard *Rhode Island*, a routine of gunnery practice in the Caribbean, squadron maneuvers in the Atlantic, and return to port for overhaul seasoned Corbett to his new duties and kept the ship in fighting shape.

By late 1915, the U.S. watched anxiously as the war in Europe intensified with the escalating slaughter of millions of combatants. Warfare, on land and sea, was studied by the U.S. with interest with a growing fear that U.S. forces would not be ready if drawn into the conflict. The scale of the war dwarfed the constabulary, expeditionary, and ships guard detachments which comprised the main unit configuration of the Marine Corps of that era. Creation of a Marine Corps Reserve was planned to augment an expansion of a wartime Marine expeditionary command, possibly consisting of several regiments, brigades, or even divisions, which could compete with equivalent European units. However, legislation to establish a Marine Reserve was enacted only in August 1916.

During 1916, Corbett participated in the American occupation of the Dominican Republic. The aging *Rhode Island* was placed on the Navy's Reserve ships list early in 1916, and no longer required its Marine detachment. Nevertheless, the ship would return to service when the U.S. became involved in the war. With the release of the Marine Guard, Corbett and his men joined the 2nd Marine Reg-



**Corbett was praised for saving the life of a Sailor from USS *Utah* who had fallen asleep, rolled off the dock and into the water.**

iment, which was organized for deployment to the Dominican Republic.

The U.S. sent a policing force of Marines and Soldiers to reconcile warring tropical countries and chaotic revolutions throughout Central America and Caribbean with the pretense of protecting U.S. civilians and property. These campaigns and interventions became known as "Banana Wars." Marines ended lawlessness, removed corrupt politicians, and reestablished order, thus restoring tropical trade and stable government.

In the Dominican Republic, Corbett and the Marines were sent to restore order and provide protection from insurgents when a revolution broke out on the Caribbean island nation. Marines were landed to occupy, administer, and reform the country. They were additionally tasked to prevent use of the country by Imperial Germany as a base in which to attack U.S. shipping or destabilize other Central and South American nations.

Corbett arrived with the Marine de-

tachment at Puerto Plata on June 1, 1916. Their arrival was met with resistance by Dominican guerrillas, and one Marine officer was killed during the contested landing. However, Corbett's unit succeeded in driving off the guerrillas and capturing Fort San Felipe. Only in 1924, after several years of counterinsurgency operations, were U.S. forces finally withdrawn from the Dominican Republic, when a new Dominican government was established to maintain peace and a treaty agreement recognized. Corbett remained with the 2nd Marine Regiment for several months to establish order and reduce insurgent activity. Corbett's tour of duty came to end in early 1917, returning to the Boston Navy Yard before transferring to the newly created Marine Corps Reserve. However, founded on Aug. 29, 1916, the Marine Corps Reserve was just counting its first three dozen Marines when the U.S. declared war against the Central Powers in April of 1917.

The Corps had global commitments





to maintain with roughly 14,000 Marines in 1916. These included ship's guard detachments, counterinsurrection police actions, and naval base garrison duties. Even if fully mobilized, the Corps could not hope to engage on the grand scale of the Western Front campaigns. A Marine Corps Reserve would provide the manpower to solve the wartime expansion, if time allowed for the many thousands to be recruited, trained, and organized but eight months from creation to declaration of war had brought just 34 Marines into the Reserve, hardly a drop in the bucket to fulfill its mission.

Recruitment into the Reserve ranks continued with all personnel immediately going on activated orders. The Inactive (Drilling) Reserve was mobilized out of existence during the war. By war's end, more than 10 percent of the Marine Corps consisted of Reserve Marines. Of the 72,000 total Marines within the Corps, there were 7,456 Reserve Marines on muster rolls by December 1918. This

**As a first sergeant, he administered and trained many young Marines.**

**He imparted knowledge and skills from his lengthy and various experiences.**

**Thousands of young men were trained by 1stSgt Corbett.**

included 269 female Marines, who could only serve on Reserve enlistments. The Reserve had grown by 21,929 percent from the founding 34 Marines.

Corbett was recalled to active service on April 10, 1917, only days after the U.S. declaration of war. For the duration of American involvement in World War I, Corbett was stationed at the Boston Navy Yard and Belmar, N.J., Naval Radio

Station. As a first sergeant, he administered and trained many young Marines. He imparted knowledge and skills from his lengthy and various experiences. Thousands of young men were trained by 1stSgt Corbett. When newly minted Marines completed rudimentary training, most were shipped to the fighting in France to join the growing expeditionary force. New recruits took their place under Corbett's able instruction. The war ended Nov. 11, 1918, and demobilizations began merely days after. Corbett's professionalism, discipline, and toughmindedness helped garner generations of Reserve Marines with fortitude and honor.

With the war over, Corbett served at the Philadelphia Navy Yard a short term before transferring to the Inactive Reserve on March 24, 1919. After a quarter century's worth of dedicated service, he retired on Feb. 15, 1922, with the rank of first sergeant. He was credited with 30 years of service for his retirement pay, since his overseas service in the Philip-





COURTESY OF NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

piners rated double-time. By November of 1922 all activated Marine Reserves were demobilized; 90 percent of the Corps' wartime strength had been discharged.

Efforts to retain combat experienced Marines and recruit new members had largely failed for the fledgling Reserve. By June 30, 1923, the entire Marine Corps Reserve would dwindle to a mere 579 Marines. The Marine Corps was unable to compete with the post-war booming economy of the "Roaring 20s." However, leadership of the Marine Corps and Congress believed the Reserve had delivered efficient and useful service during the war. Future conflicts would require similar contributions to augment, reinforce, and support the total force. Veterans like Corbett championed recruitment efforts and petitioned Congress for improvement.

Public Law 512, passed by Congress in February 1925, reinvigorated the Marine Corps Reserve with greater organization, funding, and status. Many senior

**Left: Crew members aboard USS *Rhode Island* in 1913 relax after loading coal onto the ship.**

**Below: Corbett, left, attends a Marine Corps Birthday Ball cake cutting ceremony. Even after his retirement, Corbett frequently attended these ceremonies and often had the distinction of being the oldest Marine in attendance.**



COURTESY OF CORBETT FAMILY

officers and NCOs of World War II owed their continued service of the inter-war years to the Reserve. With this solid legal footing, the Reserve would not only endure but develop into a true Reserve Component that ably supported the Marine Corps through World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Cold War, and into the twenty-first centuries.

After his retirement in 1922, Corbett returned to the Boston area, where he became a pillar of the local community and was known as a kind soul and man of faith. His support and encouragement for the Corps and especially Reserve Marines never faltered. He found employment at the Boston Navy Yard, the place of his first enlistment, and prospered comfortably. Renowned for

his well-groomed mustache, he was known to friends, family, and Boston Marines as "Handle Bars Corbett" as well as "Gentleman Jim," in reference to Jim Corbett, the famed Irish-American boxer of the era.

An avid fan of baseball and of the Boston Red Sox, Corbett was also a fixture at Little League games in Randolph and Revere, Mass. Local children knew the grandfatherly Corbett for the silver dollars he would distribute at games for feats displayed on the baseball diamond. Corbett was a regular at Marine Corps Birthday Ball celebrations in the Boston area, where he typically had the distinction of being the oldest Marine present. He lived to the distinguished age of 96 years and fittingly passed away on Veterans Day 1970. The life and service of this outstanding family man and dedicated U.S. Marine is a fitting testimony to the honor and professionalism of the U.S. Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve.



COURTESY OF CORBETT FAMILY

**Retired 1stSgt Corbett watches a Little League Baseball game.**

*Author's bio: GySgt Brian A. Knowles, USMCR (Ret), recently retired as the communications strategy and operations chief for communications and strategy office, Headquarters, Marine Forces Reserve. He served in the Marine Corps Reserve 2001-2023. He has more than 10 years of civil service experience with the National Archives and Department of Defense. He currently works for the Air Force as the wing historian for the 434th Air Refueling Wing, Grissom ARB, Ind. 🇺🇸*



## SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

### A Lesson from a Legend

One of the most notable characters I ever met in my Marine Corps career was Sergeant Major Leland "Crow" Crawford, the ninth Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps. SgtMaj Crawford was a tough, craggy-faced mortarman from West Virginia with combat tours in Korea and Vietnam, as well as two Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart. As a sergeant working in public affairs, I was assigned to interview SgtMaj Crawford during his 1980 visit to Marine Corps Air Station, Kaneohe Bay. For a young Marine noncommissioned officer, meeting the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, never mind interviewing him, is a big deal. After studying SgtMaj Crawford's bio and preparing a dozen interview questions, I felt confident and ready for our meeting.

Upon meeting SgtMaj Crawford, I was immediately struck by his military bearing. This was one intimidating dude. He looked like a real-life version of Sgt Stryker, the fictional Marine SNCO portrayed by John Wayne in "Sands of Iwo Jima." When SgtMaj Crawford saw my list of questions, he snatched it from me and started crossing out questions, all the while growling comments like, "Nope, won't answer this, not going to answer that either."

He returned the list to me with a knowing grin, the lone surviving question was something about the mess hall.

My big interview wasn't following the script. In addition to wondering

what the hell to do next, I was thinking of how the master sergeant who ran the Marine newspaper in Hawaii was going to crucify me if I came back without a story.

With nothing to lose, I asked SgtMaj Crawford about his Marine Corps career. He seemed to appreciate the fact that I knew about his combat experience, and he was particularly happy talking about his two tours as a drill instructor. I took a shot at revisiting the questions he had cut earlier. Remarkably, SgtMaj Crawford answered them all. Later, while writing up the interview, I realized that he had been testing me. He wanted to see if this fuzzy-cheeked Marine interviewing him could handle a little adversity. Despite a shaky start, it felt like I did OK.

Here are the important lessons that SgtMaj Crawford shared with me that day:

Do your homework, have a plan (or two, or three) going in.

Things can and will go sideways, be ready to improvise.

When feeling intimidated, suck it up and jump in.

I never met with SgtMaj Crawford again, and he has long since gone to the big drill field in the sky, but the lessons he imparted have served me well ever since.

CWO-4 Dennis J. Litalien,  
USMC (Ret)  
1975 to 1999  
Cedar Point, N.C.

### The Colonel Always Knows Where to Find A Cold One

Every year at Camp Lejeune they brought the reservists down for training.

They were usually on base for two weeks training with several active-duty Marine units as their aggressors. The aggressors' job was to attack them somewhere around where they were set up.

I was one of the aggressors; we would take turns going out to shoot blanks at the reservists and keep them awake all night and day. On about the eighth or ninth day, our little aggressor force decided we had been too long without beer. So, we pooled our money and

**I was standing in the  
turret of my tank  
drinking a cold beer  
when I saw a Marine  
climbing up the side  
of my tank.**

convinced one of the guys to steal a jeep. He went through the woods to the unmanned back gate and ventured into Swansboro where he bought three cases of cold beer. He came back and we distributed the beer around our little group.

That night while on fire watch at about 11:30 p.m. I was standing in the turret of my tank drinking a cold beer when I saw a Marine climbing up the side of my tank. I noticed he was wearing silver eagles, the rank of a colonel.

I thought, "Well, Jim, they'll be ripping off your sergeant stripes for this."

The colonel asked me, "Is anything coming over the radio?"

I replied, "No, sir."

Then he asked me, "Sergeant, is that a beer?"

"Yes sir, would you like

one?" I answered.

The colonel said, "It sure would go down nicely right now."

I got down in the turret and came up with three cans of cold beer, and said, "Here, sir, take these."

He smiled and climbed back off the tank. I got to thinking about it later. That colonel had been around Marines for a long time. He knew where he could find a cold beer. He was just scouting around, saw me and figured, for sure, that tank commander has to have cold beer. And he was right.

James Wade  
USMC, 1955-1959  
Quincy, Ind.

### Too Much Rank To Drive a Truck

When I was enlisted in the Corps in 1958, my recruiter asked me, "What would you like to do in the Marines?" I said that I would like to be a seagoing Marine aboard a Navy ship. I ended up being a combat engineer and enjoyed the engineers because we were always doing different assignments. Probably better than being called a "seagoing bellhop" by the squids!

In 1976 while I was stationed on Okinawa, I met, worked with, and pulled liberty with "Lieutenant John." He was from West Virginia and was a very colorful Marine.

John's biggest ambition had been to work with motor transport and drive a truck. As it turned out, when he enlisted, John was sent to sea school and then to sea duty. He spent almost two years floating on the water but John still wanted to drive a truck.

When he was promoted to sergeant, he was sent to



drill instructor duty. He was hoping to be sent to motor transport after his tour as a DI but was ordered to the military police unit at Camp Lejeune.

John was promoted to gunnery sergeant and finally sent to motor transport. Shortly after becoming a Motor Transport Marine, John was selected for LDO (limited duty officer) and promoted to first lieutenant as a motor transport officer. Too much rank to drive a truck!

CWO-3 Jack Wing,  
USMC (Ret)  
Apopka, Fla.

### Cherry Point Memory

I was a flight mechanic in VMGR-252 from August 1963 to 1964. It was my last of four years in the Corps. One day, the squadron went through the tear gas training where you practice using a gas mask inside a building filled with tear gas. After that, we were marched into the woods

for anti-guerilla warfare training, carrying our gas masks, 782 gear, and M14s with three blank rounds. Before heading into the woods single file, an instructor told us that a likely place for an ambush was at a bend in the trail and that we would have a demonstration for that.

We followed him along this path in the woods.

It seemed to me that there were 50 or so of us and I was somewhere in the middle of the pack thinking, "Hey, I'm in the air wing, why are we doing this?"

Sure enough, a machine gun (with blanks) opened up on the lead guys and we were all told to hit the deck. I was lying there in the leaves on the side of a hill, listening to the gun, and thinking maybe I could do something else. It occurred to me to low crawl around the hill through the woods and come up behind the machine gun.

There were three guys

manning the gun and their attention was down the path, so with my three blanks I stood up and fired at the gunners as I walked toward them. At this time a sergeant, who was on the gun, stood up, yelled at me something about not

**A sergeant, who was  
on the gun, stood  
up, yelled at me  
something about not  
following my orders  
and threw something  
my way that popped  
at my feet.**

following my orders and threw something my way that popped at my feet. Turned out to be a tear gas grenade that also started a fire in the dry leaves. I dropped to my knees choking and clawing for my mask, and the sergeant and

his crew surrounded me and chewed me out for ruining his demonstration. He then ordered me to stamp out the fire he started.

I thought, "Hey, I just killed you guys."

I mustered out on Aug. 5, 1964, the day of the Gulf Tonkin incident. In retrospect, many times I wish I had shipped over. Not a day goes by that I don't think of the Corps.

Cpl Norm Spilleth  
USMC, 1960-1964  
Minneapolis, Minn.

Do you have any interesting stories from your time in the Corps that will give our readers a good chuckle? We would love to hear them. Write them down (500 words or less) and send them to: Briesa Koch, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to [b.koch@mca-marines.org](mailto:b.koch@mca-marines.org). We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA membership for the "Sea Story of the Month."



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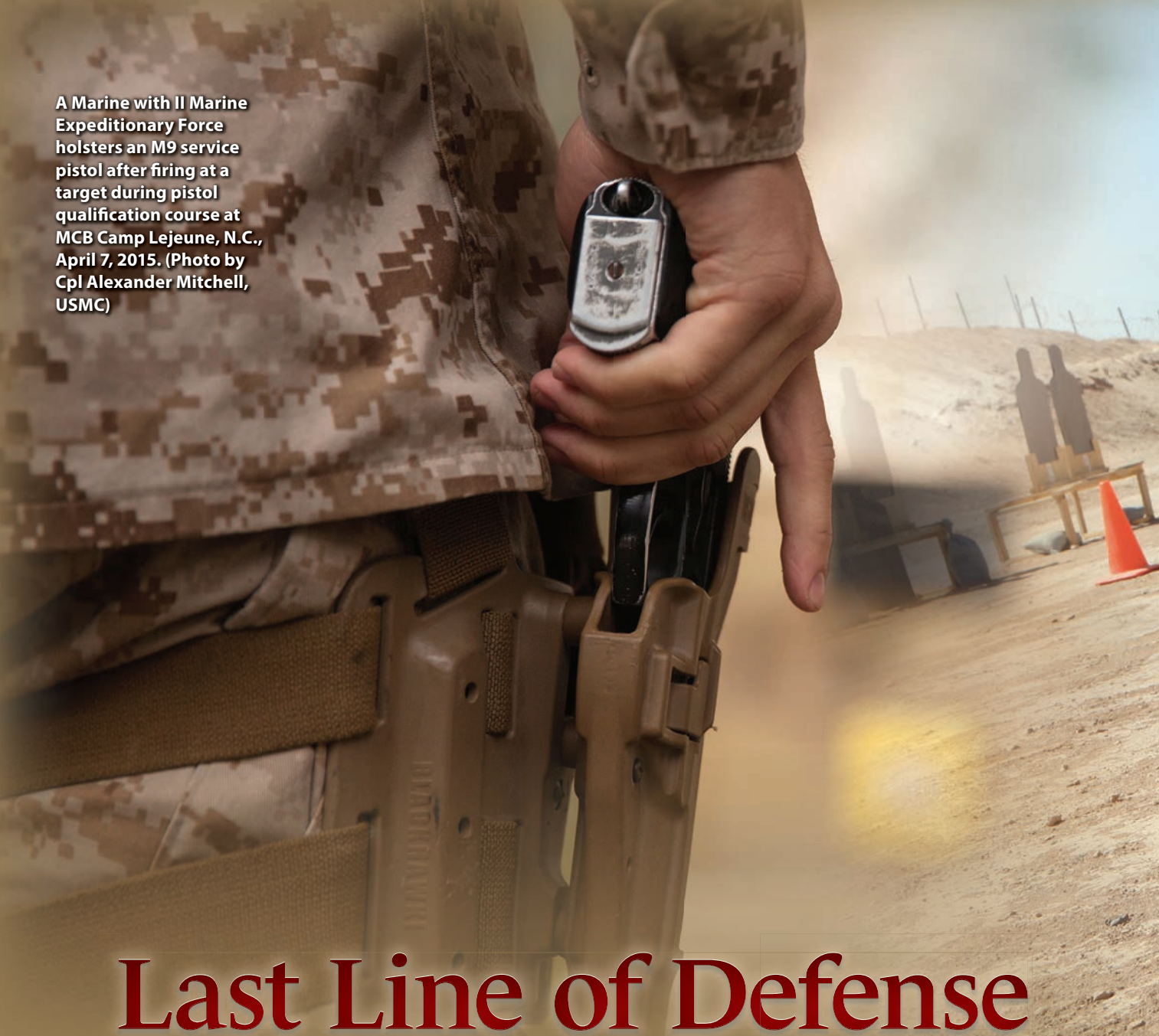
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A Marine with II Marine Expeditionary Force holsters an M9 service pistol after firing at a target during pistol qualification course at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., April 7, 2015. (Photo by Cpl Alexander Mitchell, USMC)

# Last Line of Defense

## A History of the Beretta M9

By Sam Lichtman

**C**arried by many but seldom fired at the enemy, handguns fill a somewhat strange niche in the Marine Corps' arsenal. Because they are mainly issued to personnel who are not expected to need them, their importance is often overlooked; those who carry handguns, however, rely on them as a weapon of last resort in case all else should fail. As it is finally replaced by the M17 and M18 Modular Handgun System (MHS) after 32 years in U.S. military service, the Beretta M9 leaves behind a mixed legacy. Those who trained on it

alternately praise and criticize the pistol's attributes. Depending on who's talking, the M9 is either one of the finest service pistols of its time or an inherently flawed design totally unsuited for military use. To uncover the truth behind these claims, one must understand the history behind them. The story of the Beretta M9 is a complicated one, poorly documented and fraught with political scandal, public controversy, and inter-service rivalry from the very beginning.

Marines who favor the classic M1911A1 over the M9 platform will rejoice to know

that they can blame the Army and Air Force for causing the beloved .45 to be replaced. When the Air Force became an independent branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, it took with it whatever small arms it had in inventory as part of the Army. As the service rapidly expanded through the 1950s and '60s, its security forces needed to expand their arsenal. Because the last M1911A1s were manufactured in 1945 and the Department of Defense would not authorize further orders, the Air Force had instead relied on the smaller and lighter .38-caliber M15 re-





volver to arm its security forces since at least the early 1960s. Beginning in the 1970s, however, the Air Force began to encounter problems, mainly squib loads, with their M41 ball service ammunition. Each time a defective round created a catastrophic failure, the entire lot of ammunition had to be marked as unsafe and removed from stockpiles; the Air Force found itself facing a shortage of .38 Special ammunition its airmen could trust to function.

The story of the M9 begins in 1977 with a seemingly innocuous request by the Air Force for the authority and funding to develop new ammunition for their Smith & Wesson M15s. When the request made it to Congress, it ignited a minor controversy in the House Appropriations Committee, which immediately commissioned a study to ascertain the state of the Armed Forces' handgun and handgun ammunition supplies. What



JOHN YODER

**Above:** A cutaway model of a Beretta 92SB-F 9 mm semiautomatic pistol showing some of its internal mechanisms for demonstration purposes, 1986.

**Top:** Capt Jeremy Nelson fires the Beretta M9 during a weapons marksmanship course at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Oct. 4, 2013. (Photo by Sgt Bobby J. Yarbrough, USMC)





ROBERT D. WARD

**Above: The M1911A1 .45-caliber pistol, left, was first used for military service in 1911. It was replaced in 1985 when the 9 mm Beretta M9 pistol was selected as the standard handgun of the U.S. Armed Forces.**

**Below: LCpl Zackary A. Celaya, a machine-gunner with "Echo" Co, Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Bn, 1st Marines, practices drawing an M9 9 mm service pistol during small arms qualification aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp (LHD-1), underway in the Philippine Sea, June 12, 2019.**



LCPL BRENNAN PRIEST, USMC

they discovered was nothing short of a mess; whereas the Colt M1911A1 was supposed to be standard issue across all the services, the study found that the U.S. military had more than 25 different makes and models of handguns and more than 100 different types of handgun ammunition in inventory. Congress balked at the Air Force's request and demanded that all the branches standardize on one handgun.

To investigate possible new service handguns, the Department of Defense formed the Joint Service Small Arms

Program, led by the Army. Because the Air Force was the service that apparently had the most urgent need, the handgun program fell on the Air Force Armament Laboratory (AFAL), which issued a set of requirements. Of particular note, they specified the need for a pistol chambered in 9x19 mm for standardization with the rest of NATO, with a magazine capacity of at least 13 rounds and a double-action/single-action trigger system. For comparison, the M1911A1 has a standard magazine capacity of seven rounds of .45 ACP (Automatic Colt Pistol) with a

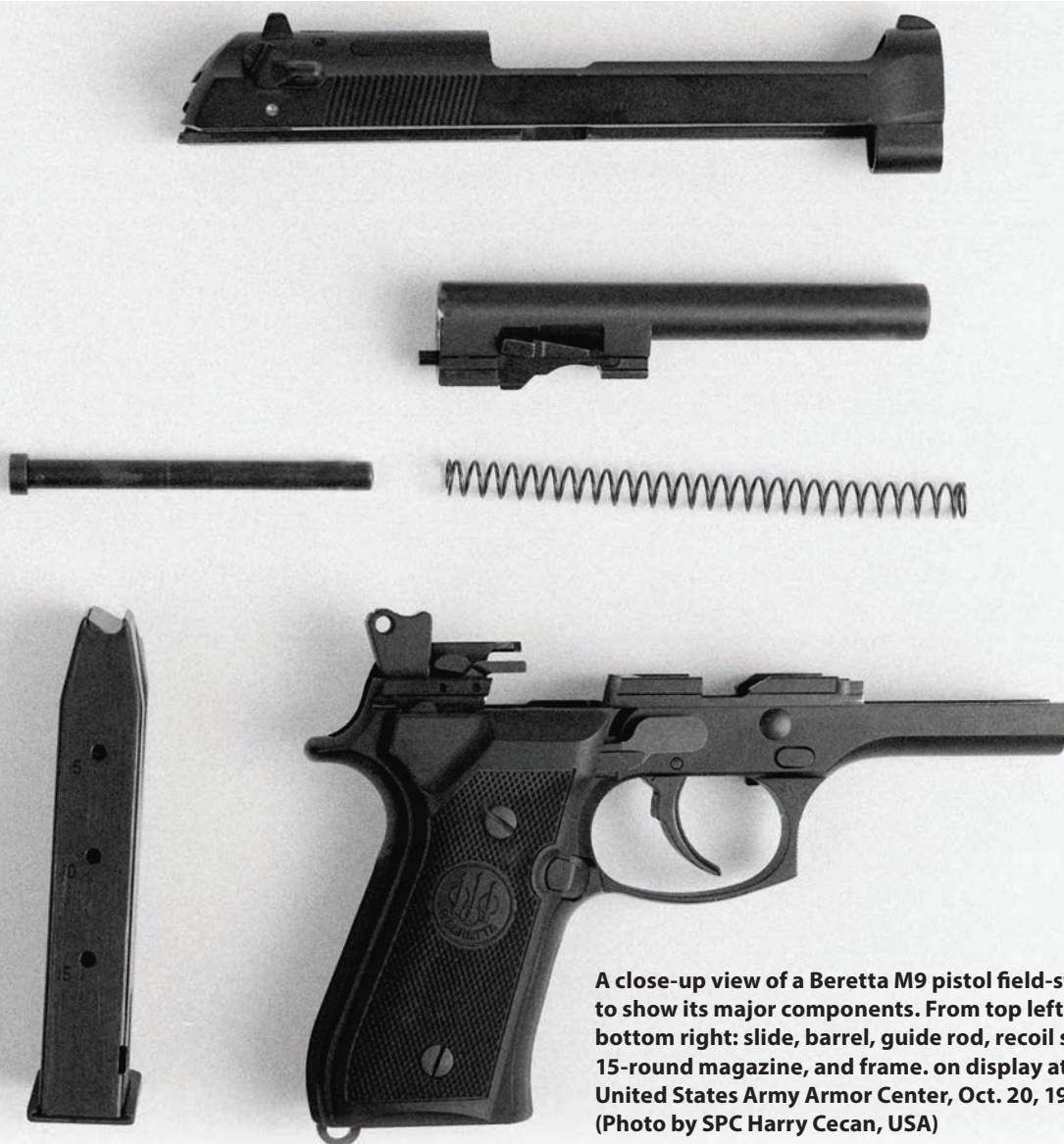
single-action-only trigger. The requirements also specified an ambidextrous combination safety/decocker with a firing pin block so that the pistol could be carried safely with the hammer down.

AFAL began testing 10 examples each of nine different pistol designs, but quickly down-selected to six: two from Fabrique Nationale (FN) by way of Browning, one from Colt, one from Smith & Wesson, and one each from foreign brands Star and Beretta. Browning submitted two variants of the famous Hi-Power, designed for FN by John Browning himself in the early 1930s and used by many world militaries into the 2010s. Colt's entry was their new SSP ("Stainless Steel Pistol"), cosmetically similar to an M1911 but mechanically akin to the French military's Modèle 1935A. Smith & Wesson, the dominant player in the law enforcement market, submitted their new Model 459, an updated version of the Model 59. Spanish manufacturer Star sent examples of their Model 28, one of their first designs not based on the M1911 platform. Finally, Italian gunmaker Beretta, the oldest firearm manufacturer in the world but a relative unknown in North America, submitted the 92SB-1. As a control, the AFAL tests also included 10 each of the M1911A1 pistol and M15 service revolver the new weapon would replace.

The pistols were run through a battery of tests from 1977 to 1980, analyzing their performance in everything from accuracy and ergonomics to reliability in extreme conditions. Most of the pistols suffered from frequent malfunctions or parts breakage, with some even having their front sights fall out on the range. Only two designs survived to the end: the Smith & Wesson 459 and the Beretta 92SB-1. Military small arms requirements quote reliability in "mean rounds between failure" (MRBF), calculated by simply dividing the number of rounds fired by the number of any type of stoppages experienced. The Beretta proved to be the most reliable of the bunch; whereas the original requirements demanded at least 625 MRBF, it achieved a whopping 2,000. Furthermore, it proved to be easier to shoot accurately than either the M1911A1 or the M15, especially for less experienced shooters. Declaring the Italian pistol as the winner, the Air Force concluded its testing and prepared to sign a contract for 100,000 pistols in early 1982.

Before that could happen, however, the Army raised a complaint on the basis that the testing had not been sufficiently scientifically rigorous. They specifically





**A close-up view of a Beretta M9 pistol field-stripped to show its major components. From top left to bottom right: slide, barrel, guide rod, recoil spring, 15-round magazine, and frame. on display at the United States Army Armor Center, Oct. 20, 1987. (Photo by SPC Harry Cekan, USA)**

cited the mud and extreme temperature testing as not replicable and complained that the M1911A1s in the control group were issued weapons and not factory-new examples procured specifically for the trials. Furthermore, because the Army uses more handguns than any other branch of the U.S. military and has its own very robust procurement system, they insisted that the responsibility to adopt the new service handgun should fall on them. Army Ordnance leadership discarded the AFAL's results entirely and decided to conduct their own testing to select a new pistol, now dubbed "XM9."

The Army issued a set of requirements in 1981 and received samples from four manufacturers but terminated the program the next February on the basis that none of the pistols met their requirements. Allegedly, none of them achieved any more than 600 MRBF. Due to increased scrutiny from Congress and the media,

### **To investigate possible new service handguns, the Department of Defense formed the Joint Service Small Arms Program.**

the Army withheld as much information as possible; to this day, very little is known about the 1981 trials. The original requirements and results are either not publicly available or have been lost to time. It is possible that the testing was manipulated so as to defeat foreign manufacturers' designs or even sabotage the XM9 program as a whole in favor of keeping the M1911 in service. It is known that the Army was interested in the possibility of converting its existing pistols to 9 mm for NATO standardization in-

stead of buying a new design, and that a significant contingent in the military and in Congress supported this idea. Whatever the case may be, widespread accusations of fraud convinced the Army to discard the results of its own "secret" trials and start over from scratch.

In late 1983, the Army solicited submissions of pistols meeting an exhaustive list of both mandatory and preferred features. While there were some slight changes (for example, minimum magazine capacity was reduced from 13 to 10), the Army's requirements were mostly in line with what the Air Force had defined six years previously. More importantly, the requirements were formulated to be as objective as possible and specified relative to the known characteristics of the M1911A1 so the new XM9 would be provably superior. The trials would be open to manufacturers from the U.S. and abroad, with an em-



phasis on commercially available designs that could quickly be purchased in large quantities without the military having to wait on new production facilities. To this end, the Army requested 30 examples of each pistol along with the highly unusual requirement for replacement parts upfront. Testing began early in the next calendar year.

A total of eight manufacturers chose to compete; Beretta and Smith & Wesson both submitted virtually the same pistols they had sent to the AFAL trials. Famed German gunmakers Hecker & Koch and Carl Walther Waffenfabrik put forth their P7M13 and P88, respectively, and Steyr-Daimler-Puch out of Austria sent the model GB. Back from the AFAL trials were the Colt SSP and FN BDA despite their previous lackluster performance. Swiss company SIG had recently formed a conglomerate with a factory in Germany and offices in the United States; they submitted the P226, a derivative of their own highly innovative P220.

The Steyr GB was the first to fall, eliminated in May of 1984 for failing in reliability testing. It was an innovative and well-made pistol from Austria but never achieved success in the military, law enforcement, or civilian markets. Fabrique Nationale voluntarily withdrew its BDA soon after—not a debilitating loss, as they already held contracts for

the M2 and M240 machine guns and would soon get one for the M249. Colt had suffered from issues with its SSP for years and unceremoniously withdrew the weapon in June; it would never see a full production run. Testing continued through the summer and was nearly finished by September. That month saw

**That left just two models still standing to compete head-to-head in the final phase of testing: the SIG Sauer P226 and Beretta's current model, the 92F.**

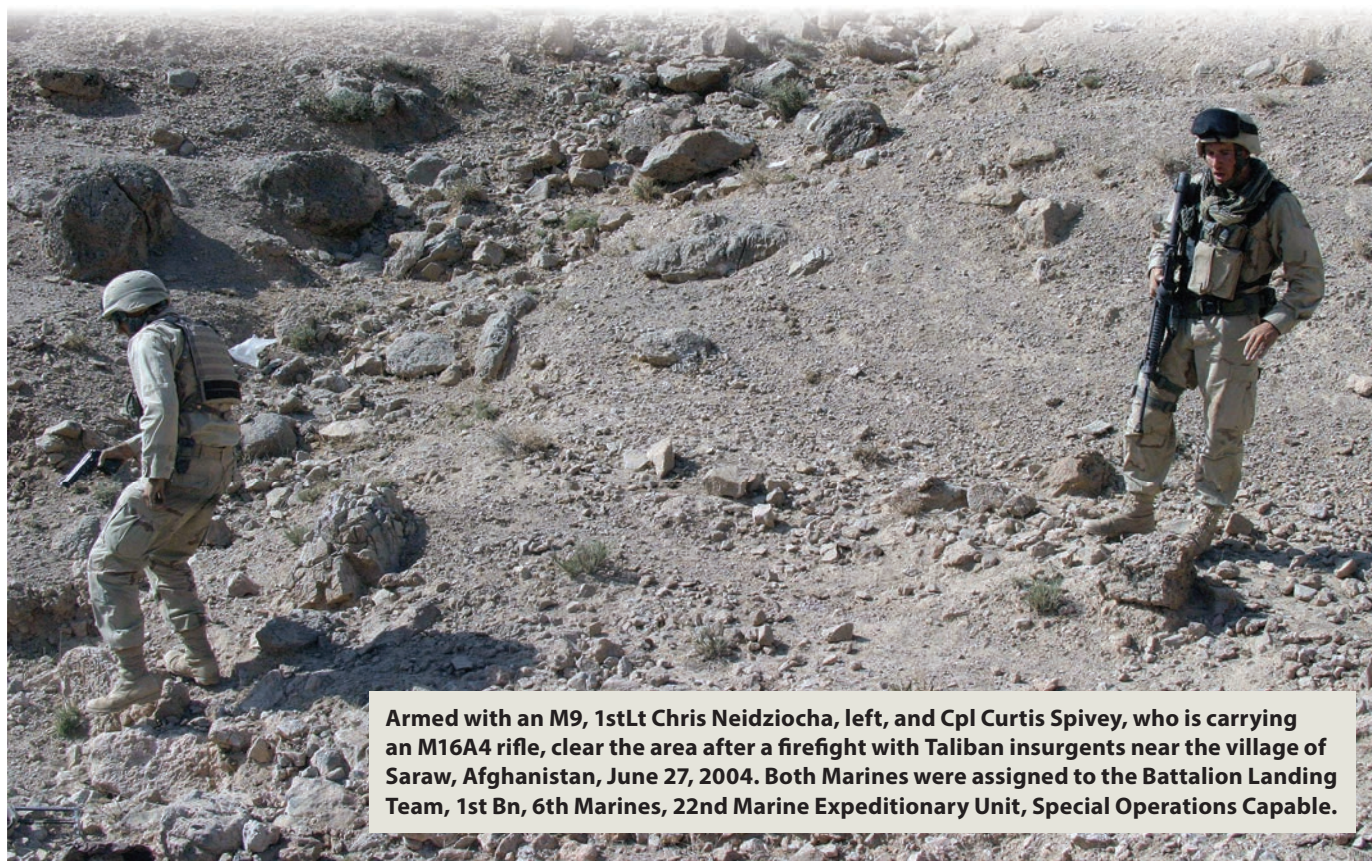
the rejection of the Walther P88, HK P7M13, and Smith & Wesson Model 459M, each for multiple reasons.

That left just two models still standing to compete head-to-head in the final phase of testing: the SIG Sauer P226 and Beretta's current model, the 92F. Both achieved excellent reliability, 2,877 and 1,750 MRBF respectively, with a large advantage to the latter in dry conditions. Both pistols passed with flying colors and were deemed technically acceptable. Preference would be given to whichever manufacturer offered a better price on

the total system package, including a set list of replacement parts, not just the unit price for the pistols. Bidding was aggressive, but Beretta gave the government a better deal. On Feb. 14, 1985, the U.S. Army officially adopted the Beretta 92F as the M9 pistol.

Despite the Army coming to the same conclusion as the Air Force had years before, the service pistol controversy only intensified. As soon as the Army made its announcement, competing manufacturers raised legal challenges to the decision. While the Army began purchasing shiny new M9s, the other manufacturers went to court, and the General Accounting Office launched an investigation into their allegations.

Smith & Wesson argued that the rejection of their 459 for failing firing pin energy and service life requirements had been unfair. In the interest of guaranteeing reliable ignition with the hard primers found on some military ammunition, the pistols were expected to meet NATO standards for the kinetic energy of the firing pin on impact. In converting from metric to U.S. imperial units, however, the Army had rounded their numbers up enough that the Smith & Wesson pistols were no longer deemed acceptable. Regarding service life, the published requirement was for the pistol to survive 5,000 rounds on average. In testing, the



**Armed with an M9, 1stLt Chris Neidziocha, left, and Cpl Curtis Spivey, who is carrying an M16A4 rifle, clear the area after a firefight with Taliban insurgents near the village of Saraw, Afghanistan, June 27, 2004. Both Marines were assigned to the Battalion Landing Team, 1st Bn, 6th Marines, 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Capable.**

GYSGT KEITH MILKS, USMC





**Left: Cpl Richard Hernandez, a data network specialist with 15th MEU, assembles the M9 pistol during a small arms training exercise at Range 111 aboard Camp Pendleton, Calif., Nov. 25, 2013. (Photo by Cpl Emmanuel Ramos, USMC)**

Army treated this as a *minimum* requirement rather than an average and rejected the 459M in part because one example out of three began to suffer cracks in its frame between 4,500 and 5,000 rounds.

SIG Sauer, represented in the United States by SACO Defense, complained that the pricing model the Army had used to make its decision was unfair. The Army's solicitation required four magazines per pistol and one full set of spare parts for every 10 pistols. Beretta's significantly lower prices played into their pistol's selection as the M9, but SACO's legal challenge suggested that their P226 required fewer replacement parts than the Beretta 92F and alleged that the listed spare parts had been counted incorrectly.

Part of the GAO's investigation into the recently concluded pistol trials sought to address accusations of outright corruption. According to some people, the U.S. government had made a secret deal with the Italian government to adopt Beretta pistols for the military and the entire trials process had been a cover operation. According to others, the Army had conducted some of its testing in secret and leaked other competitors' pricing data to Beretta to give them a competitive edge in the final bidding.

In the world of government contracts and especially military acquisitions, many safeguards exist to ensure free and fair competition. Unfortunately, bad actors can abuse those same legal mechanisms to waste taxpayer money by filing protests they know will not hold up in court. None of the legal challenges regarding the XM9 trials were deemed to have sufficient merit and were promptly thrown out, but the GAO continued to investigate at Congress' behest until every allegation had been put to rest. The GAO's independent investigation found

**Right: A view of two M9 pistols used in a testing program at the Rock Island Arsenal, Ill. The pistols grips have been removed and the leads for an electronic monitoring device have been attached beneath the weapons' slides.**



TONY LOPEZ



SGT ALLISON LOTZ, USMC

**Marines with the Provost Marshal's Office, H&HS, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., engage targets with a Beretta M9A1 during a law enforcement range qualification on MCAS Yuma, Feb. 28, 2019. The M9A1's railed dust cover allows it to accept accessories such as the weapon-mounted light visible in the foreground.**

no evidence of corruption or conspiracy surrounding the XM9 program and noted that SACO's claims about spare parts were inaccurate at best, disingenuous at worst. They did find that Smith & Wesson had been eliminated unfairly; to put the whole matter to rest, the Army agreed to test the Smith & Wesson pistols again. After the manufacturer declined to participate, the final obstacles to full adoption of the M9 seemed to be gone.

Marines who served during the late

1980s will remember another controversy surrounding the M9 which arose soon after it entered service. Some pistols in Army and Navy service began suffering from excessive wear; frames developed cracks and a few slides even broke in half and caused minor injuries. The spectacular slide failures prompted an immediate response: until the problem was identified and solved, pistols were to be thoroughly inspected and have their slides replaced every 1,000 rounds. The



**Below: Cpl Steven D. Pendleton, vehicle commander with Jump Plt, H&S Co, 3rd Bn, 8th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 6, removes the magazine from his M9 pistol after firing during a live-fire qualification range on Forward Operating Base Geronimo, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, on Sept. 3, 2012.**



USMC

government publicly accused Beretta of shoddy manufacturing and demanded they redesign the M9 to rectify the issue as soon as possible, lest the whole \$75 million contract be thrown out. Such accusations dealt significant damage to the reputation of the pistol and the company itself.

By that time, the Beretta 92 had been in production for well over a decade with no such problems surfacing until now, so the company quickly recalled the failed slides to its factory in Italy to find out what was going wrong. The slides had already passed high-pressure proof testing and magnetic particle inspection when they were made, and metallurgical analysis showed that they had indeed been made to the proper specification. What Beretta found was that the slides had failed due to repeated firing with overpressure ammunition far outside the NATO specification, which would also account for the cracked frames.

The U.S. government then turned its attention to the ammunition manufacturers. Olin Winchester and Federal Cartridge Corporation had been awarded contracts to produce NATO-compliant M882 ball ammunition for the M9, but without any history of manufacturing NATO ammunition, Olin Winchester simply took civilian load data and reused it for military production. NATO cartridge cases, however, are not the same as civilian ones—while visually indistinguishable, the smaller internal volume



GYSGT ISMAEL PENA, USMC

**Above: Marine Corps 1stLt Christina M. Nymeyer, Combat Logistics Bn 31, 31st MEU, reloads an M9 service pistol during a live-fire exercise on the flight deck of USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD-6) at sea, Feb. 13, 2015. The Marines conducted the training in order to maintain their marksmanship skills while on their spring patrol of the Asia-Pacific region.**



MC2 ERIC CHAN, USN

**MC1 Carlos Gomez, attached to Fleet Combat Camera Pacific, cleans his M9 service pistol, during an exercise that provides live fire and scenario-based training to combine joint combat camera assets, May 14, 2016, in Azusa, Calif.**

meant that the same charge of gunpowder would produce much greater pressures. The result of the ammunition manufacturer not taking the time to recalculate its powder charge was that the pistols were subjected to mechanical stresses far greater than what they had been designed or built to handle. Given such defective ammunition, the real surprise is not that the pistols failed, but that it

took multiple years for that to happen. Even after the problem was fixed, USSOCOM was still wary of the M9 and opted to purchase P226s instead, type designated MK25 Mod 0.

Understandably upset that the U.S. government had so publicly denigrated their pistol over failures caused by faulty ammunition, Beretta filed suit for defamation and won. Furthermore, the design changes and modifications to existing pistols were done at the government's expense. All military M9s and civilian Beretta 92s produced since 1988 have a hammer pin with an enlarged end and a corresponding groove inside the slide. With this modification, even if early, defective Winchester M882 ammunition is used, it will physically block the slide from traveling far enough back to exit the frame. The civilian model's designation was changed from 92F to 92FS to reflect this change; the same pistol is still in production and available on the civilian market to this day.

Ever since the technical data package was updated to reflect those safety modifications, every M9 pistol purchased by the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force has been identical. Apart from serial numbers and other manufacturer markings, any M9 part made in the late 1980s should be identical to the corresponding part made in the 2010s. On the civilian side, however, Beretta continued to refine and update the design throughout the next several decades. The beginning of the



Global War on Terror sent thousands of M9s into combat for prolonged periods, and with that trial by fire, Marines began to recognize some of the pistol's shortcomings. In 2003, the Marine Corps expressed interest in certain improvements made to civilian variants of the pistol but that were not available to the military. Because the Marine Corps lacks the same kind of resources and acquisitions system the Army has, it was not allowed to bring new M9s into the inventory that did not comply with the old specifications from the 1980s. It could, however, use its discretionary powers to purchase new pistols in a commercial off-the-shelf configuration (COTS) with the features they desired.

The COTS pistol, designated the M9A1, entered Marine Corps service in 2005. It is very similar to the original M9 and shares most parts except for a new, strengthened locking block designed for better longevity. Externally, the M9A1 is easy to distinguish because of its three-dot sights, railed dust cover, and thicker trigger guard. The MIL-STD-1913 rail (often incorrectly referred to as "Picatinny rail") is the most notable functional improvement as it allows the pistol to easily accept a visible or infrared weapon light for night combat. M9A1s were issued with new sand-resistant magazines for better performance in the arid environments of Afghanistan and Iraq. The sand-resistant magazine has a nickel

plating to reduce friction and prevent sand and dust from adhering to its surface. M9 and M9A1 magazines are otherwise identical and completely interchangeable between the two variants.

Marines have carried pistols from the M9 family from Operation Just Cause to the war in Afghanistan and every deployment in between. The weapon has

**Throughout its service history, the M9 garnered a controversial reputation. Some hailed it as a highly accurate and reliable handgun, while others complained about its perceived lack of lethality.**

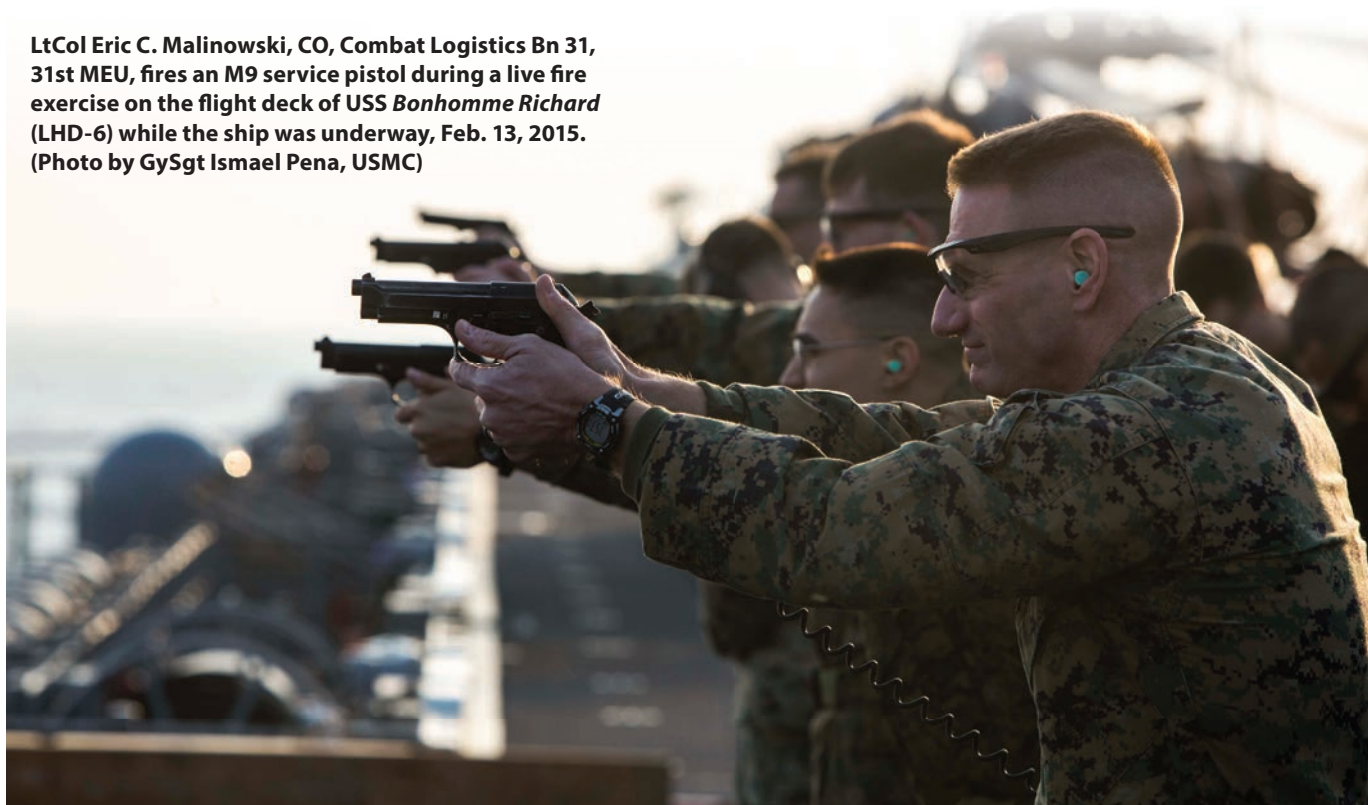
served the Marine Corps for more than three decades and on six continents. While fired relatively little in combat, the M9 saw extensive use among Marines in more specialized roles, such as MPs and Personal Security Details. It was also relied upon by some machine gunners and radio operators, among others, as a last line of defense against enemy combatants should all else fail.

Throughout its service history, the M9

garnered a controversial reputation. Some hailed it as a highly accurate and reliable handgun, while others complained about its perceived lack of lethality. It is usually compared to its long-lived predecessor, the iconic and heavily romanticized M1911. "Every time you get rid of some weapon, there is a lot of nostalgia," said Colonel Tim Mundy, a retired Marine infantry officer. "People always act like the sky is falling."

Some older Marines initially viewed the M9—a new Italian pistol firing a smaller German round—with some skepticism, but according to Mundy, whose assignments included a tour as commanding officer of the School of Infantry-East, "A few would admit that the 1911s were loose, inaccurate, and worn down." Despite the older pistol's legendary reputation, it was clearly antiquated and most of the examples in inventory had long outlived their usefulness. Colonel Chris Woodbridge, USMC (Ret), who also served as an infantry officer, agreed with that assessment. "You'd still see them [M1911s] in the armory in the late 1980s," he recalled. "They were like maracas, they were so loose. The parts were so worn that they were really loose-fitting and consequently they could be unsafe." Mundy and Woodbridge, both of whom commanded infantry Marines in combat, said that the new pistols were a welcome replacement.

**LtCol Eric C. Malinowski, CO, Combat Logistics Bn 31, 31st MEU, fires an M9 service pistol during a live fire exercise on the flight deck of USS *Bonhomme Richard* (LHD-6) while the ship was underway, Feb. 13, 2015. (Photo by GySgt Ismael Pena, USMC)**





Some of the skepticism toward the M9 arises from its smaller 9 mm NATO chambering as compared to the M1911's larger and heavier .45 ACP. "The debate," Woodbridge said, "primarily centers over the 'stopping power' of an individual round ... and the permanent cavitation that a round produces." While a larger and heavier .45 bullet can produce a larger wound cavity, the M9's 9 mm gives it a softer recoil impulse and more than double the magazine capacity. These positive attributes allow a shooter to fire the Beretta faster and more accurately, landing more shots on target. Compared to the .45, in Woodbridge's opinion, "the trade-offs are worth it."

Although the M9 proved easier to shoot than its predecessor, some safety problems sprung up as a result of user error. Marines in combat arms military occupational specialties, such as gunners and mortar men, had ample opportunity to train with the pistol, but many staff officers and senior NCOs usually only fired their service weapons once a year for qualification. Good safety habits, therefore, weren't always retained. As requested by the military and produced by Beretta, the M9 by itself is an exceptionally safe pistol, with multiple mechanical interlocks to prevent it from firing unless

the trigger is physically pulled all the way to the rear with the external safety disengaged. No mechanical safety, however, can completely prevent accidents that arise from mishandling. Negligent discharges occasionally occurred at the clearing barrel when a Marine pulled the trigger without clearing the pistol properly. Mundy and Woodbridge both said that this was mostly a problem



CPL SUMMER ROMERO, USMC

**Above: A Marine with 8th Engineer Support Bn disassembles and reassembles an M9 pistol as part of an exercise during a squad competition at Canon Air Defense Complex, in Yuma, Ariz., on Oct. 24, 2016.**

early on in the M9's service history, particularly in the summer of 1990 during the large mobilization at the outset of Operation Desert Shield. Marine Corps leadership decreased the spate of negligent discharges by increasing safety training and punishing those who caused them.

As for reliability in combat environments, opinions on the M9 differ. In retired Major Vic Ruble's experience, it was "totally luck of the draw who gets what," adding that some of the pistols worked well, while others did not. The poor reliability was primarily due to lack of maintenance, according to those with firsthand experience, including Ruble, who made numerous combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The Beretta 92 series was already a mature and refined service pistol by the time the U.S. military adopted it; the Marines interviewed for this article all said that while no firearm is perfectly reliable, the M9 typically ran well when properly maintained. During the Global War on Terror, however, M9s in service began to suffer from serious mechanical problems and even parts breakage issues. Small arms expert Christopher R. Bartocci worked as a consultant for the Department of Defense investigating failures in service



**Cpl Ross D. Raper, an M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank gunner assigned to Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Bn, 2nd Marines, 24th MEU SOC, practices engaging targets with his M9 service pistol on a live fire range in the Central Command AOR in 2003. (Photo by Sgt Bryan Reed, USMC)**



**Marines assigned to Headquarters Battery 12 fire Beretta M9 pistols during the joint Korean-U.S. exercise Bear Hunt 88, Oct. 17, 1988, in South Korea.**

weapons during that time; he noted that every broken part that he found had either not been replaced at the proper time or had been manufactured incorrectly to begin with. He determined that armorers had either not been trained properly on the required maintenance and parts replacement schedules or were simply not paying enough attention to notice signs of excessive wear in critical areas. The M9's recoil spring and locking block are two of the most critical components to replace with expected service lives of approximately 5,000 and 10,000 rounds, respectively. If either of these components are not replaced on time, the pistol will begin to malfunction and will eventually jam up completely when the locking block breaks.

According to Bartocci, many of the M9s he inspected in Afghanistan included substandard parts made by third-party manufacturers. Based on his experience, a *properly maintained* Beretta 92 or M9 is one of the most reliable pistols available; problems arise when parts aren't replaced on time. "The biggest problem with any of the weapons we have in this country," he said in a recent interview with *Leatherneck*, "are logistics and maintenance." It seems likely that the M9 would have earned a much better reputation among Marines who carried it if lack of maintenance hadn't held back its reliability.

In recent years, M9 and M9A1 pistols in U.S. military service have begun to show their age. Decades spent in harsh conditions combined with poor maintenance and infrequent parts replacement have taken their toll, and advances in technology have made the core design appear relatively dated. While the military originally sought out the Beretta 92 for its double-action/single-action trigger system in the interest of safety, modern striker-fired pistols offer a more consistent trigger pull and less complex control scheme. The M9's aluminum alloy frame made it relatively lightweight for its time but relatively heavy compared to modern polymer-framed pistols. Due to these and other reasons, every branch of the military has moved toward the new M17 and M18 pistols, which began to replace M9s and M9A1s in 2017; the last of the legacy pistols have already left Marine Corps service.

Between its introduction in the 1980s



CPL BATEMAN, USMC

and its replacement in recent years, the M9 was fielded in large numbers and served the Marine Corps in conflict zones all over the world. Ruble said he is still glad he carried it in Iraq and Afghanistan as it demonstrated its value on several occasions. Inside buildings and vehicles too cramped for the M16 to be useful,

**It seems likely that the M9 would have earned a much better reputation among Marines who carried it if lack of maintenance hadn't held back its reliability.**

he took advantage of the M9's greater maneuverability.

Even beyond its utility in combat, it was a valuable tool for self-defense and deterrence. Handguns are still seen as a status symbol in many parts of the world. As chance would have it, officials in Saddam Hussein's government had favored older Beretta designs before

the invasion; the Italian pistol's familiar lines made a significant impression on locals who saw it. "A pistol was a big deal, so you needed to know that going in," Ruble recalled. "If you pull it, they expect you to use it, and they're ... terrified of that." Over in Afghanistan, with the preponderance of green-on-blue attacks, Ruble said he depended on his pistol even more when working with the Afghan military and police.

Even when he and other Marines didn't know if they could trust the locals, they trusted the pistol as a symbol of authority, a deterrent, and a last line of defense. In that respect, though held back by lack of maintenance, the M9 served the Marine Corps admirably for more than three decades in every clime and place.

*Author's note: The author would like to give special thanks to Christopher R. Bartocci and David J. Schneider.*

*Author's bio: Sam Lichtman is a freelance writer who specializes in small-arms technology and military history. He has a weekly segment on Gun Owners Radio. He is a licensed pilot who lives in Virginia. 🐼*



# Honorable Desertion

By Sgt Edward Evans, USMC

With a war in France, Texas was no place for an old Marine.

This is the story of the man who was so eager to get into action that he deserted from the Marine Corps. Under ordinary circumstances, the quickest way into battle would be service in the military organization with the “First to Fight” reputation.

But this is not an ordinary story.

In 1918, Sergeant Miles T. Barrett actually deserted from the 8th Marines in Texas, joined the Army to get to France, then turned himself over to the 97th Company, 6th Marines, and later won promotion to gunnery sergeant and decoration as a hero under fire.

This is one of the strangest cases in the history of the Marine Corps. It all began in a recruiting office in Seattle, Wash., in August 1917. Veteran Marine Miles Barrett presented himself for reenlistment for service in World War I, requesting a guarantee that he would be sent to France.

He had served from 1900 to 1905 when the Spanish American War and Boxer Rebellion were still the topics of the day. His longest tour of duty had been on Guam, which was then the Devil’s Island of the Pacific with legends that rivaled those of the French Foreign Legion.

The Commandant, Major General George Barnett, gave his approval for reenlistment, stating that men like Barrett were needed in France. Barrett was transferred immediately to Philadelphia where the last units of the 6th Marines were just about ready to board ship, but Barrett was assigned instead to the 8th Marines then being formed at Quantico.

The 8th Marines moved out by transport for Galveston, Texas, in November 1917—and stayed there. For seven months Barrett tried to get overseas service. He was promoted to sergeant, fired expert with the rifle, and supervised the mess of the 105th Company. Every time he requested combat service, his commanding officers looked at his gray hair, smiled patiently and refused. The crisis came in an altercation with the battalion commander, a fiery major, and Barrett planned his great adventure.

In his own words Barrett tells of his decision: “I knew that death was the penalty for desertion in time of war before I took the step. I obtained a 72-hour furlough on May 1, 1918, changed into civilian clothes, and went to Beaumont, Texas. There I applied for enlistment in the Army engineers. I passed the physical examination and was sent to Fort Sam Houston. There

I declined to take the oath until assured by the commanding officer that I would go to join the 20th Engineers then in France. I was sworn in on May 7th.”

Barrett was transferred to Camp Humphrey, Va., and by June 14 was on his way to France aboard the transport *Kroonland* with the Third Engineer Replacement Regiment.

Meanwhile, the 8th Marines had placed the name of Miles Barrett on the Deserter’s Roll when he failed to return at the end of his liberty, and the notices of reward had been sent out to his next of kin, but Barrett had taken care to cover all eventualities. Just prior to embarkation, he had written to his congressman, giving full details and requesting him to communicate with the Commandant.

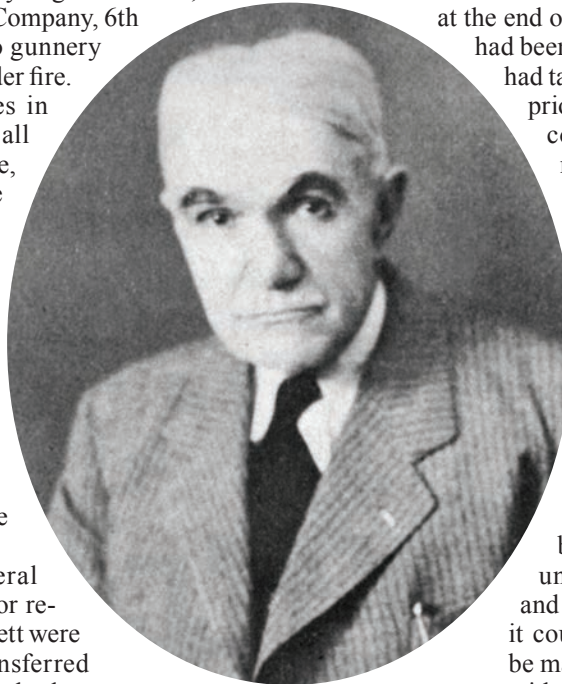
Aboard the transport, Barrett had been appointed mess sergeant for 5,000 troops. When they debarked at Saint-Nazaire, France, he was made acting supply sergeant for the regiment until assigned to the 116th Engineers.

Barrett was close to the front, and he felt the time had come for him to reveal his status to his commanding officer. The company commander and battalion commander placed Barrett under arrest but as a prisoner at large, and they used him as a drill master until it could be decided what charges were to be made against him. Later he was charged with violation of the 58th Article of War by enlisting in the Regular Army without being discharged from the Naval Service. All of his Army officers recommended clemency in view of his excellent service.

On Aug. 5, 1918, the investigating officer recommended that all charges against Barrett be dropped for lack of evidence that he had actually violated the articles of war as a deserter, having never legally been out of the control of the military, or of fraudulent enlistment since he had not accepted any pay while in the Army.

The Army authorities released Barrett from arrest, and on Aug. 12, he was ordered to be taken under guard to Chatillon and turned over to the Marine commanding officer there on Aug. 20. At the headquarters of 6th Marines on Aug. 27, he was identified by the first sergeant as the same man who had been reported as a deserter from 8th Marines 106 days before in Texas.

Barrett, again under arrest, was assigned to the 97th Company as a prisoner at large, until orders were received from the 4th



GySgt Miles T. Barrett

**Every time he requested combat service, his commanding officers looked at his gray hair, smiled patiently and refused. The crisis came in an altercation with the battalion commander, a fiery major, and Barrett planned his great adventure.**



**Marines direct traffic in Saint-Nazaire, France, in 1917. Initially assigned to unload ships and stand guard duty, the Marines spent the Christmas season of 1917 far from the battlefield.**



COURTESY OF NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

Brigade commander concerning his status. Brigadier General Harbord referred the case to MajGen John A. Lejeune, commander of the 2nd Division. Lejeune ordered that all charges of desertion and fraudulent enlistment be dropped, and that Barrett be restored to duty and rank of sergeant since his action had resulted entirely from his desire to serve in combat.

After he was cleared of all charges, Barrett got plenty of action. In September he participated in action in the Saint-Mihiel offensive. In October he fought on the Champagne front, and at the time of the Armistice, he was in action in the Argonne.

At Blanc Mont on Oct. 9, Barrett went far beyond the call of duty and vindicated his escapades of the past by serving with “distinguished and exceptional gallantry in action.”

“At the risk of his own life,” the citation from MajGen Lejeune reads, “Sgt Barrett rescued many wounded of another regiment from a field swept by heavy shell and machine-gun fire. By his coolness and daring, he inspired his comrades to go to the assistance of the wounded and thus was the means of saving many lives.”

His company commander promoted him to gunnery sergeant and recommended him for the Distinguished Service Cross and a commission. For this same action he was cited by General Pershing, the Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces, and was awarded the Croix-de Guerre and a citation by Marshal Petain, Commander of the Armies of France.

These citations and awards were not made until after the Armistice when Barrett was serving with the 6th Marines in the Army of Occupation at Coblenz, Germany. The regiment returned to the States on Aug. 6, 1919, and on Aug. 13, Barrett was discharged at Quantico, Va., with the Good Conduct Medal.

The second part of the story begins here. It concerns Barrett’s 16-year battle to have his records corrected and to collect pay for the four months he served with the Army. From the time he



COURTESY OF JIM NILO

**Above: MajGen John A. Lejeune, left, ordered that all charges against Barrett be dropped, and MajGen George Barnett, right, the 12th Commandant of the Marine Corps, later approved Barrett for reenlistment.**

left the 8th Marines until he was paid off upon his discharge, he had not received a cent of pay. Even then, the final settlement only included the time covered since his return to the Marines in France.

This unusual case took more than the usual regulations to untangle it. Legally, he could not be paid by the Marine Corps for the time he had been absent from duty. Under Army regulations, any man found to be a deserter from the Navy or Marine Corps



is not entitled to pay for his time in the Army. Barrett had signed the payroll in the 116th Engineers, but the money was returned by the company commander. This is the pivot around which the long battle revolved because the Army maintained that since Barrett had signed the payroll, he had also been paid.

General Lejeune, as commander of the Second Army Division, had ordered that Barrett be restored to duty and rank and that all charges against him be dropped which voided any record of desertion or fraudulent enlistment. Barrett never stood court-martial for his action.

Upon discharge, Barrett had returned to his pre-war occupation, police work, as a member of the plant protection force of a steel company in Pittsburgh, Pa. He corresponded regularly with the Marine Corps and the War Department in regard to his pay account. Finally, he had to take the case to Congress and request that an act be passed to reimburse him for his four months of service in the Army.

Several Congressmen became interested in the case, among them Clark Thompson, a representative from Texas. Thompson was a Marine Reserve officer and had been a corporal in the 105th Company, 8th Marines at the time of Barrett's desertion. As the bill for payment was originally presented, Barrett was to have received payment from the Army equal to his pay as a sergeant in the Marine Corps, although he had not actually held any rank in the engineers higher than private. Such a bill could not have been approved and so it had to be rewritten.

After several more tries the bill got through the House and Senate, only to be vetoed in 1934 by President Roosevelt because of the statement by the War Department that their records showed that Barrett had been paid. Another investigation was

made, and the War Department admitted that the original payroll bore the notation concerning receipt of Barrett's pay by the company commander.

While all this was going on, the War Department notified Barrett that he had been awarded the Silver Star medal vice the Distinguished Service Cross previously recommended by his company commander.

Upon clarification of the non-payment situation in the Army due to his transfer to the Marine Corps, the House and Senate passed a corrected bill, and on July 22, 1935, Miles Thomas Barrett, former gunnery sergeant, received from the General Accounting Office a draft on the Treasury for \$109.85, four

months pay as a private in the Army. It had taken him 16 years and \$500 of his own money to square accounts with the Army.

"It was the principle of the thing I was fighting for," observed Barrett later. "The government owed me some back pay and I was out to collect it. That's all there was to it."

During the long siege, Barrett had come to Washington and taken civil service work as a federal guard to be near the scene of the action. He had served with the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Treasury, and the Library of Congress and had recently retired.

But fate is often fickle. The whimsical lady dealt Barrett one last hand that brings an ironic finale to the case. On the night of Oct. 31, 1946, Barrett's rooms in Washington were looted and among the missing items was a leather case containing all of his original signed citations, and medals; Croix-de-Guerre, Silver Star, German Occupation, and Marine Good Conduct.



**"It was the principle of the thing I was fighting for," observed Barrett later, "the government owed me some back pay and I was out to collect it. That's all there was to it."**



Marines of 3rd Plt, 96th Co, 6th Marines, rest in the village of Ronvaux, France. Barrett served with the 6th Marines during World War I.





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## HMX-1 Marine Awarded for Saving Life of Fellow Marine

On Nov. 14, 2022, Corporal Chase Portello was enjoying lunch at S&G restaurant in the town of Quantico when he witnessed a fellow Marine experiencing a medical emergency. Without hesitation, Portello rushed to the man. Air Force physician, Captain Jennifer Fields, who was dining at the restaurant that day with her Marine husband, also sprang into action to begin administering first aid.

The patient was not breathing, and while Dr. Fields and Cpl Portello initially found a dangerously faint pulse, the patient soon had no pulse.

“The only thing that went through my mind was, there’s a Marine that needs help,” said Portello. “I know I can, so I got up and helped.”

“I went straight into my training,” said Portello. “Every step was deliberate, the way we did it, the doctor and I.”

After lowering the patient onto the

ground, Portello and the doctor immediately started performing CPR, while also directing onlookers to call emergency services and find an automatic external defibrillator (AED). Fields and Portello continued CPR for several minutes until first responders arrived and used their AED on the patient. Portello continued to assist the paramedics as the colonel’s health was not improving. The first responders transported the patient to a nearby emergency room where he recovered.

Cpl Portello, a noncommissioned officer with Marine Helicopter Squadron One, received the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal on Dec. 16, 2022, for his actions. The officer who pinned the award on Portello was Colonel Carlos Urbina, the Director of Command Element Information Division, Combat Development and Integration, the Marine whose life he saved.

“I have no recollection of approximately 30 minutes,” said Col Urbina. “I’ve spent



**Cpl Chase Portello, a noncommissioned officer with Marine Helicopter Squadron One, received a Navy Commendation Medal from Col Carlos Urbina, the director of Command Element Information Division, during an award ceremony at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., Dec. 16, 2022. Portello received the medal for saving the life of Col Carlos Urbina on Nov. 14, 2022. (Photo by LCpl Joaquin Dela Torre, USMC)**



LCPL JOAQUIN DELA TORRE, USMC



the last month or so speaking with first responders and other witnesses that were there to piece it together.”

Urbina made several visits to the firehouse to thank the first responders who arrived on scene and during one of those visits, he learned that Cpl Portello had started CPR before the first responders arrived.

The grateful colonel presented Portello his medal. “I was unconscious when he met me, but what I do know about him is that when I was in a situation when my life depended on his hands, without me even knowing him, he acted. To me, that speaks to the brotherhood of a Marine,” said Urbina.

“The award is really nice and I’m very grateful for the command to give it to me,” said Portello. “But the major award is getting to meet the person that I got to save. I think that’s the best part.”

LCpl Joaquin Carlos Dela Torre, USMC

### **MCAS New River Marine Receives Bronze Star for Heroic Actions in Afghanistan**

“When we found out that the Taliban had moved into the center city right outside of our tower, that’s when all hell broke loose,” said Master Sergeant Kevin W. Haunschild, former air traffic control (ATC) mobile team leader with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 162, 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU). “Afghan aircraft began attempting to take off our runway without listening to any commands from our air traffic controllers. It was chaos; it looked like a bee’s nest.”

In July 2020, MSgt Haunschild had assumed the role of staff noncommissioned officer in charge of his team while attached to the 24th MEU for what seemed like a typical deployment.

That all changed in August 2021.

“Leaving felt like any other deployment,” said Haunschild. “It’s never easy having to say goodbye to your family, big or small, and not knowing how long you’re going to be gone for, knowing that you’re going to miss birthdays, holidays, and significant events in your family’s life.”

Before Haunschild knew it, he was landing at Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Aug. 13, 2021, with VMM-162 where he’d soon experience the largest non-combatant evacuation operation in military history. His mission would be to coordinate with Air Force Crisis Response Group and Special Operations Command Team Kabul to provide effective tower and ground ATC services at HKIA.



CPL ANTONINO MAZZAMUTO, USMC

**LtCol Robert D. Barbaree, the commanding officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station New River, pinned the Bronze Star on MSgt Kevin Haunschild, a senior air traffic controller with H&HS, MCAS New River, on MCAS New River in Jacksonville, N.C., Jan. 20, 2023. Haunschild received the medal for his actions as Marine Air Traffic Control Mobile Team Leader with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron-162 during Operation Freedom’s Sentinel.**



CPL ANTONINO MAZZAMUTO, USMC





SSGT AARON PATTERSON, USMC





SSGT AARON PATTERSON, USMC

**CMC HOSTS COMBINED AWARDS PROGRAM AT NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS—** Gen David H. Berger hosted the Commandant of the Marine Corps Combined Awards Program at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Quantico, Va., Jan. 18. The CMC Combined Awards Program recognized Marines in the combat instructor, drill instructor, Marine Security Guard and recruiter special duty assignments who embodied extraordinary leadership, superior management and organizational skills, stalwart devotion to duty and exceptional performance throughout the year.

This year's award recipients are SSgt Seth Marcoe, Marine Security Guard of the Year; Sgt Alexandra Martin, runner-up for Marine Security Guard of the Year; GySgt Danny Risener, Drill Instructor of the Year; SSgt Christian Katembo, runner-up for Drill Instructor of the Year; GySgt Samuel Sanchez, Marine Combat Instructor of the Year; GySgt Benjamin Morrow, runner-up for Marine Combat Instructor of the Year; SSgt Chao Pengwarne, Recruiter of the Year; and SSgt Zachary Thivierge, runner-up for Recruiter of the Year. The Marines and their families spent time visiting Washington, D.C., and touring the Capitol building, the Home of the Commandants, and Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., the day before the ceremony.



SSGT AARON PATTERSON, USMC

“When we got there, everything seemed to be going relatively smooth,” said Haunschild. “On Aug. 15, that’s when we got a call from our colonel who told us to get our things and move into the main airport.”

That day, civilian air traffic controllers spotted a possible Taliban element conducting suspicious activity near the main control tower Haunschild occupied. While this activity occurred, an Afghan Cessna aircraft with a blown tire had to abort its takeoff, which obstructed the airport’s runway, ceasing all aircraft movement while civilians crowded the area and fled to the nearest hangars.

“A Marine, two Army Special Operation soldiers, and I jumped into a pickup truck while Afghans were running out of the aircraft back into the hangar,” said Haunschild. “We managed to attach ratchet straps to the aircraft and tow it off of the runway.”

After things seemed to be relatively normalized, Haunschild had to go outside the wire to recover radio equipment from a stranded Afghan air traffic controller. As he was returning to his ATC tower, Haunschild started receiving enemy small arms fire. Luckily, he arrived safely with the critical radio equipment.

Two weeks after arriving at HKIA, Haunschild and 230 other Marines were extracted for their eventual flight back home. Haunschild returned home Sept. 22, 2021, reporting back to Marine Air Control Squadron-2, Marine Air Control Group-28, on Marine Corps Air Station New River in Jacksonville, N.C.

“The fact that he was able to pull his team together without much guidance or resources was amazing,” said Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Barbaree, the commanding officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, MCAS New River. “He shows up, he’s professional, he cares about his Marines and makes sure the mission is completed thoroughly.”

Haunschild, a Kingsville, Texas, native, graduated from Kaufer High School in Riviera, Texas, where he would later attend Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College before enlisting in the Marine Corps as an Air Traffic Control Specialist in November 2004.

“He is a truly selfless leader and a great mentor for myself and the Marines,” said Sgt Ian M. Chryst, crew chief for ATC, at New River. “He could lead me into a burning pit, and I’d follow him right in.”

For his actions at the airport, Haunschild received the Bronze Star Medal during a ceremony held at the air station headquarters on Jan. 20, 2023.

Cpl Antonino Mazzamuto, USMC





# A Brother's Journey:

## Five Decades to the Story of a Lifetime

By Kyle Watts

On Saturday, Oct. 21, 1967, David Jensen was working at a caterer's office in Hales Corners, Wis. As the 18-year-old prepared orders for the coming week, the office owner entered the room.

"Dave, you need to go home."

His terseness caught David off guard. He appeared somber and was obviously not playing around.

"Well, no," David replied. "I can finish up this order, at least."

"No, Dave. You can't linger. You need to go home, now."

He gathered his things and returned to his parent's house. The staff car from the local Marine Corps recruiter's office sat in the driveway. A recruiter's presence was not unusual. David had known them since he was 12, the first time he entered their office with his older brother, Alan. Alan was a Marine, and David was determined to become one too.

David walked through the front door. A major and first sergeant in dress blues sat in the living room with David's parents. A Bible lay open on the coffee table. Tears poured down his mother's cheeks. His father approached him.

"David," he faltered. "Alan is dead. He was killed."

David moved toward the recruiters. His gut reaction came out as anger.

"You got proof? Where's his dog tags?"

The Marines sat him down and described what they knew. Alan was killed in Vietnam on a recon patrol a few days earlier. Due to the intensity of the firefight, Alan's body had to be left behind. Marines were still working to recover him.

The recruiters left after David settled down. He sat with his family in a group hug. What now? Nothing would ever be the same. His big brother was gone.

A Western Union telegram arrived the following day, officially confirming the news. One of Alan's Marine buddies traveled to the Jensen home from Detroit.

He stayed with them as they waited for further news, helping craft letters to Alan's unit in Vietnam, and telling the family about Alan's first combat deployment, where they served together in 1965. Finally, nearly a week later, more news arrived. Marines had recovered Alan's body. He was coming home.

Alan's remains arrived in Milwaukee, Wis., on Nov. 7. When his father arrived



**Sgt. Alan Jensen is pictured here in Vietnam in early October 1967. Serving as an assistant patrol leader with 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, Jensen was killed in action just a few weeks after this photo was taken. He was 25 years old.**

at the funeral home, the director informed him the funeral would require a closed casket. His father asked to see the body, but the director refused. His father insisted and witnessed firsthand the horrors of the war, and how unkind the enemy could be to an American body.

On Veterans Day, a police motorcade brought Alan to General Mitchell Field in Milwaukee to be transported to Arlington National Cemetery. The family flew to Washington, D.C., and prepared for his interment the following week. David watched his brother descend into the earth among the seemingly infinite rows of identical headstones. How could this be real? He reflected on his brother and decided, now more than ever, he wanted to follow in Alan's footsteps.

David and Alan were the two boys in their family of six. Alan was the oldest child. David arrived seven years later, with a sister between them, and another sister after him. From his earliest memories, David always considered Alan his role model.

"We grew up hunting, fishing, trapping," David remembered. "One of his friends told me once on a camping trip that Alan had berated him, telling him he didn't even have what it took to be a Boy Scout. Even back then, Alan was a gung-ho kid, kicking ass and taking names. He taught me how to shoot, he taught me about girls. He was a Marine!"

When Alan decided to enlist, David begged to sign his name on the papers alongside him. The age gap between them, however, meant David would have to wait. Alan shipped out in 1961, serving initially as a machine-gunner with "Golf" Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines. He worked his way up the ranks and became a section leader. He deployed to Vietnam where he transitioned to 3rd Recon Battalion and began running patrols behind enemy lines.

David received Alan's letters and waited for his brother to come home. Alan finally returned during the summer of 1965. He left active duty altogether when his contract ran out that August. David was elated. The brothers returned to their usual outdoor activities. Now 16 years old, David was thrilled to show his brother how much older he'd become and how much closer to beginning his own enlistment in the Corps.





David watched his brother descend into the earth among the seemingly infinite rows of identical headstones. How could this be real? He reflected on his brother and decided, now more than ever, he wanted to follow in Alan's footsteps.

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I DEEPLY REGRET TO CONFIRM THAT YOUR SON SERGEANT ALAN T JENSEN USMC DIED 17 OCTOBER 1967 IN THE VICINITY OF THUA THIEN, REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. HE SUSTAINED FRAGMENTATION WOUNDS TO THE HEAD AND BODY FROM A HOSTILE EXPLOSIVE DEVICE WHILE ON PATROL. DUE TO TACTICAL SITUATIONS HOWEVER, HIS REMAINS WERE NOT RECOVERED. SEARCH OPERATIONS ARE CONTINUING AND YOU WILL BE KEPT INFORMED OF ALL SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS. PLEASE ACCEPT ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS OUR SINCEREST SYMPATHY IN YOUR BEREAVEMENT					
WALLACE M GREENE JR GENERAL USMC COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS.					
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The Jensen family received this official notice of Alan's death five days after he was killed, and the day after local recruiters arrived on their doorstep with the news. The telegram sparked more questions than it answered, just as the recruiters' visit had, as both notifications came prior to the recovery of Alan's body. (Background photo by Kyle Watts)

COURTESY OF DAVID JENSEN





COURTESY OF DAVID JENSEN

**For Alan Jensen, the Marine Corps provided the only lifestyle he found suitable. In what was likely his final letter, written Sept. 20, 1967, Alan referenced a cousin who was apparently considering leaving the Marines to become a civilian. "What does Pat plan to do?" he questioned his family back home. "Stay with the Corps, or get out into that Number 10 life?"**

W  
WHAT DOES PAT PLAN TO  
DO? STAY WITH THE CORPS OR  
GET OUT INTO THAT NUMBER 10  
LIFE?  
GOING TO SALUTED THIS UP  
GETTING LATE & I'VE GOT TO  
BE AT THE DROP ZONE EARLY  
TOMORROW FOR A JUMP

REGARDS TO THE WHOLE  
OUTFIT-

A. J. Jensen.

As Alan headed off again, David's father took him aside.

"I was pissed," David remembered. "My brother had such a profound influence on me. My father told me, 'This is what he has to do. A man has to do what a man has to do.' I was disappointed, but I had to understand."

Alan reenlisted in February, and by May was already back in Vietnam. Now with 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, Alan once again operated on clandestine patrols behind enemy lines. By the time of his death that October, Alan had achieved the rank of sergeant and was an assistant team leader in the company.

David carried on with his plan to follow in his brother's footsteps. His parents held reservations about him enlisting and they worked with recruiters to guarantee David would not see combat. He enlisted in March 1968 and served with land and carrier-based maintenance squadrons servicing jet engines. He tried to go to Vietnam but was refused. The Corps decided one son was enough for the Jensen family. David left active duty after his initial contract ended, then returned to service later in the Marine Corps

Reserve as a Huey maintenance technician. He exited the Marines altogether in 1977.

In 1982, David learned about the newly dedicated Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. He had visited Alan's grave at Arlington several times but now hoped to make the journey again and visit "The Wall." For years, life's obligations delayed the trip. Regrettably, David's father passed away in 1985 before he had the opportunity to visit the memorial. Finally, in 1987, David flew to Washington with his mother and sister.

David entered The Wall's pathway near the Lincoln Memorial. The Wall grew beside him as he searched for panel 28E. The sea of names blurred together. Others walked the path beside him. Some wept as they placed flowers at the base of a panel. Some stood in silence with hands raised over a name on the wall. As The Wall began to shrink once more, 28E came into view. David traced his finger down the left side counting lines. When he reached 26, Alan's name surprised him, first in that line at the left of the panel. David paused with his fingers touching the name above his head. Below Alan's name, David's reflection filled the polished granite. Names continued to infinity left and right. Other passing visitors moved as a blur through the reflection. In that moment, David felt

Alan encouraged the decision.

"I remember he told me if you were going to be a Boy Scout, you'd better be an Eagle Scout," David said. "And if you're going to join the military, you'd better be a Marine."

Alan tried settling back into civilian life. He got a job and even purchased 16 acres in northern Wisconsin with one of his Marine buddies. Something was off, however. David recognized the change. Alan seemed angrier. Neither brother had ever been the holiest of kids, but now Alan's fuse proved extra short. One day while driving down the road, the car in front of them stopped at an intersection. Alan's temper exploded when the driver took too long to drive on. David watched

in awe from the passenger seat as Alan exited their car in the middle of the road, walked up to the vehicle in front of them, and yanked the driver out onto the street to fight.

Finally, in early 1967, Alan decided he could not take the civilian life anymore. He told David and the rest of his family he had to go back in the Marines. He could not see a good future for himself without the Corps. Alan contacted another Marine he'd served with on his first tour, who was now a recruiter in Louisiana. The recruiter told Alan that he could get him back in, but he'd lose the rank he had when he was discharged. Without hesitation, Alan jumped in his car and drove south to sign the papers.



**Alan Jensen is memorialized on panel 28E, line 26 of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Kyle Watts)**

his brother again, just the two of them, there on The Wall.

“Looking at the big picture of over 58,000 names on that wall, that meant there were a lot of other people who had to go through these things like my family had to go through,” David reflected. “I realized there were so many other brothers or sisters out there with someone’s name on the wall. I was not the only one.”

David flew home to his wife in Colorado. Recounting the trip for her felt like reliving his brother’s death 20 years earlier. Memories of his parents’ house and the recruiters’ car in the driveway rushed back into his brain. They broke down his manly facade and forced him to confront a painful reality he’d long tried to ignore.

“I think I have more healing to do.”

David embarked on a journey to discover what happened to Alan, and who he was as a Marine in combat. He reviewed letters his family had received 20 years earlier. Alan’s commanding officer, executive officer, platoon commander, and other fellow Marines responded to the family’s requests for more information in the wake of Alan’s death. Their letters painted a basic picture of the patrol where Alan died. David progressed slowly at first as the Marines directly connected to Alan’s final patrol proved difficult to find.

He finally achieved a breakthrough in 1989. An ad appeared in *Leatherneck* Magazine for an upcoming Force Recon Association reunion in Dallas, Texas. David explained who he was to the contact listed and received an invitation to attend. When the time came, David traveled to Texas, eager to learn what questions might be answered.

David discovered how small a world the Force Recon community lived in. Virtually everyone at the reunion either knew of or served with his brother. Marines who served with Alan on his first deployment in 3rd Recon Battalion told David of their shadowy missions in rubber boats off the Vietnamese coast in 1965. Many others told him stories from 1967, leading up to Alan’s death. David met Stan Chapman, a Navy corpsman. Chapman described his painful memories of caring for Alan’s remains once they were recovered, and his presence in the room when a group of Marines were summoned to positively identify him.

The patrol where Alan died was



**They broke down his manly facade and forced him to confront a painful reality he’d long tried to ignore. ...  
David embarked on a journey to discover what happened to Alan, and who he was as a Marine in combat.**



**David Jensen attending the Force Recon Association reunion in Dallas, Texas in 1989. From the left: J.J. Reubenfeld, David Jensen and James Sullivan.**

something out of the ordinary for Force Recon. A team of 17 Marines, dubbed Recon Team Petrify, went into an area swarming with North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers. The enemy presence was normal. The size of the patrol was not. Petrify consisted of more than double the number of Marines on a standard mission. Every member of the team was wounded. One other Marine besides Alan

was also killed. A company-size “Bald Eagle” reactionary force was called to rescue Team Petrify. Multiple helicopters were shot down trying to extract them.

David arrived back in Colorado armed with information and contacts he’d never dreamed of making. Several weeks later, David found a package on his front doorstep. He cut open the box and removed an unlabeled cassette. A small note





COURTESY OF DAVID JENSEN

**Alan Jensen, left, in Okinawa in 1965. Alan began his time in the Marine Corps as a machine-gunner with 2nd Bn, 7th Marines.**

accompanied the tape, penned by one of the men he met in Dallas.

“David, I think you’ll find this interesting.”

He hustled to a cassette player and inserted the tape. The speaker crackled to life with pops and static as it turned from reel to reel. A grainy, scripted voice broke through in a southern accent.

“These interviews are narratives of a recon patrol originally inserted to set up an observation post in Elephant Valley northwest of Da Nang. The location is the Command Post, 1st Force Recon Company, 1st Marine Division, Quang Nam Province, Da Nang TAOR, Republic of Vietnam. The day is 23 October 1967. The subject is Recon Patrol Petrify. The classification of these interviews is secret until downgraded by proper authority.”

Different voices followed each other in succession. The interviews had been done in Vietnam mere days after Petrify returned to base. When they were recorded, David’s family had only recently been told of Alan’s death, and his body had still not yet been recovered. The tape played through interviews of four patrol members, all describing every detail they could remember surrounding the patrol, Alan’s death, and their terrifying extraction. David rewound the cassette and played it again. He still could not believe what he was hearing. Two years into his search, Alan’s story was finally coming into focus.

On Oct. 14, 1967, leaders from 1st Force called for volunteers to go out on a special mission. Another Recon team had inserted on a hill called Dong Top Mountain. In less than 24 hours, the Ma-

**David arrived back in Colorado armed with information and contacts he’d never dreamed of making. Several weeks later, David found a package on his front doorstep.**

**He cut open the box and removed an unlabeled cassette.**

rines faced continuous enemy contact, taking a severe beating. First Force was tasked with relieving the team and continuing the patrol where they left off. Due to the known enemy presence, officers wanted a larger team and asked for volunteers. Seventeen Marines were thrown together into Team Petrify. Alan volunteered for the mission and acted as one of the senior members.

Petrify inserted the following day, picking up where the previous team left off. For over 24 hours they moved through the jungle around Dong Top without contact. Signs of the enemy, however, were omnipresent. In the afternoon of patrol’s second day, the team’s machine-gun crew opened fire when NVA soldiers rounded a bend in a trail. One soldier dropped dead, and a second enemy fell wounded. The two Marines advanced toward them. Grenade rounds launched from a M-79 grenade launcher suddenly exploded near them, driving them back.

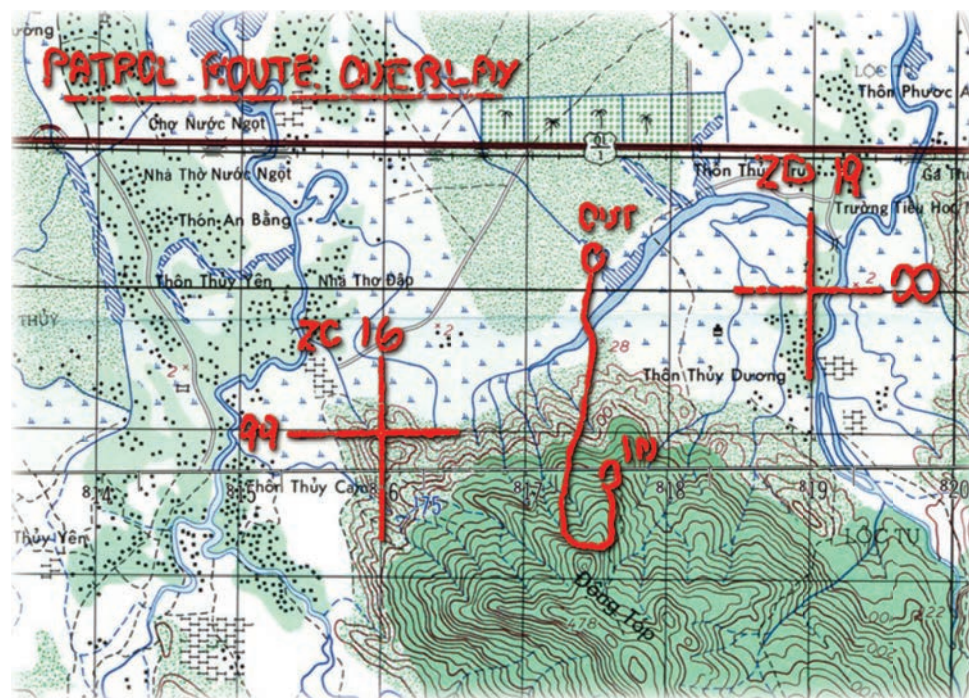
Seemingly out of nowhere, Alan came sprinting through the underbrush. Screaming and hollering and firing his rifle, he drew enemy attention off the machine-gun team, allowing them to

move to cover. When the M-79 rounds ceased, Alan ran forward to collect anything he could find. Blood and body parts covered the trail, but both NVA were gone. Alan and the gun team re-joined the main group. Alan exposed himself to more enemy fire to help the rest of the team break contact. The team harbored in the thickest brush they could find. Dusk settled into the defense with the Marines, and the last rays of sun faded to black. The night passed at an excruciating pace. Small arms fire punctuated the silence in all directions as the NVA scoured the mountainside.

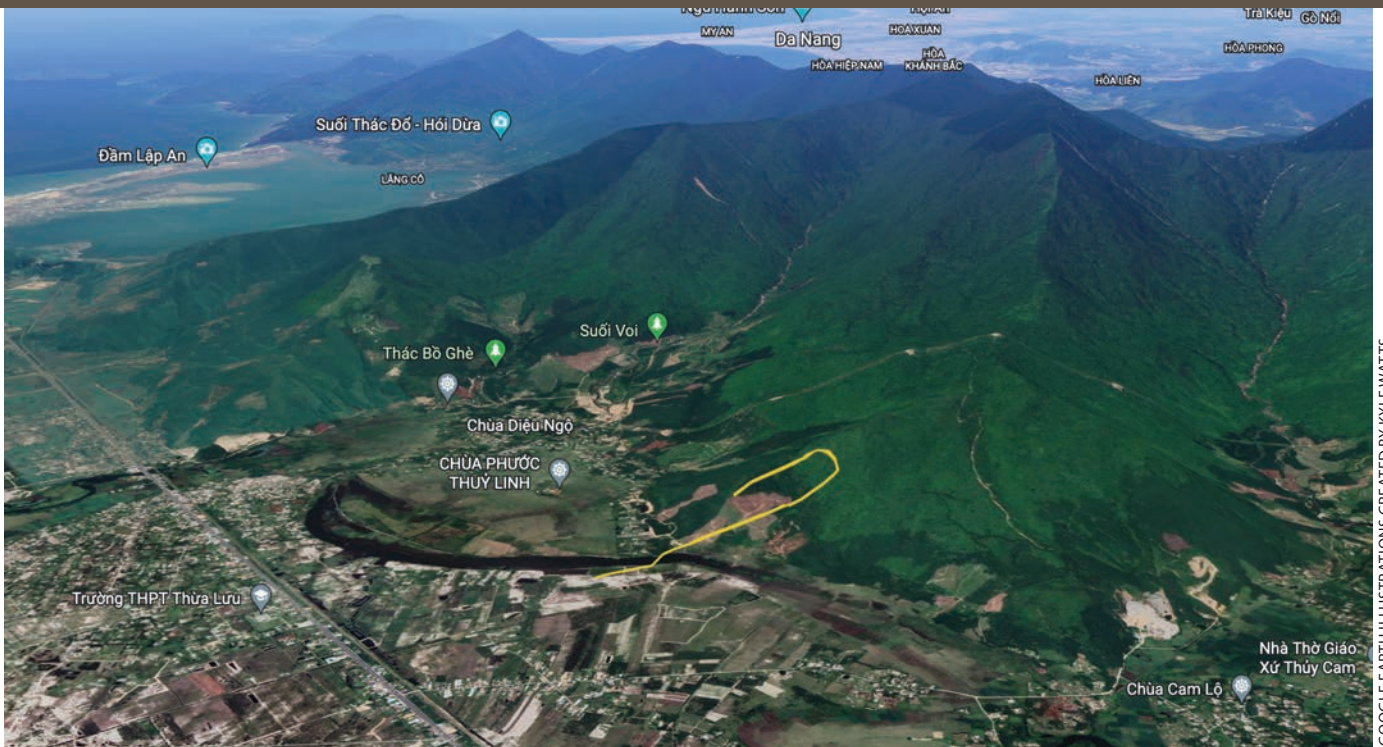
Dawn of Oct. 17 brought little relief. At noon, the team decided they had to move. They located an area filled with huge rocks and set up their defense once more. The position offered ample cover and concealment. Unknown to the Marines, however, the NVA occupied a ridge above them. Rustling voices increased in all directions around Petrify. Suddenly, around 4 p.m., machine-gun fire raked the position and grenades rained down.

The opening enemy barrage devastated the Marines. Within seconds, Alan was dead. Two bullets ripped through his

**The original patrol report for Team Petrify’s mission in October 1967 contained a hand-drawn map overlay. This illustration was created by placing the map overlay on a topographic map as it would have been at the time. (Illustration by Kyle Watts)**







GOOGLE EARTH ILLUSTRATIONS CREATED BY KYLE WATTS

The route of Team Petrify, captured in 3D from Google Earth, helps illustrate the mountainous terrain of Dong Top where the team battled the NVA.



GOOGLE EARTH ILLUSTRATIONS CREATED BY KYLE WATTS

chest, and grenade fragments hit his head. LCpl Jerry DeGray fell also, shot twice in the head. Several other Marines were seriously wounded, and every member of the patrol suffered at least minor shrapnel wounds. Despite the damage inflicted, every surviving Marine returned fire. A ferocious roar enveloped the mountain as the Recon team battled with NVA surrounding them.

Huey gunships arrived on scene within 30 minutes. They worked over the ridge and surrounding jungle. An observation

plane arrived, armed with an assortment of jets behind him. As the first flight of gunships expended their ordnance, jets took turns racing in with bombs. A second flight of Hueys arrived, pumping rockets and machine-gun fire into the jungle. A CH-46 approached at dusk to attempt an emergency medevac but was shot out of the zone. All the air support available seemed only to kick the hornet's nest harder. Seeing the team's predicament, officers called for a reaction force to get Petrify out. A company of grunts

deployed to the base of Dong Top at dusk and began the long trek up the hill.

Helicopters arrived back over the team shortly after 7 a.m. the next morning. Hueys once again pounded the ridge and jungle floor. Even as more gunships and jets expended their ordnance, enemy fire struck three choppers attempting another extraction and forced them out of the zone.

Finally, around 9 a.m., the reaction force arrived on the hill. The grunts established their defense and worked





COURTESY OF DAVID JENSEN

**Alan Jensen, left, sitting with friend and fellow Recon Marine, Sgt James E. Huff, in early October 1967. Only 10 days after Alan was killed, Huff drowned on a mission in the same area on Oct. 27, 1967.**

toward the Recon team. A single squad finally battled through to reach them two hours later. Because of the amount of gear and wounded to get out, they split the patrol in half. The first group, with the most seriously wounded and the body of LCpl DeGray, moved out with the infantry squad. Nine Recon Marines remained behind with Alan's body.

The firefight swelled as the morning wore on. NVA soldiers appeared from every direction with grenades, mortars and machine guns, hell bent on stopping the grunts and wiping out Petrify. After several hours, the remainder of the team still among the rocks decided their position was untenable. The grunts would not make it back. The team would have to make it to them.

They placed Alan's body on a stretcher and moved out along a trail. The battle raging between the reaction force and NVA increased in ferocity as they neared the grunts' position. A fever pitch of explosions roared through the jungle. Suddenly, tracer rounds crisscrossed the trail all around and among them. The Marines carrying Alan's stretcher dropped his body and brought up their rifles. On one side of the trail, less than 20 meters away, a group of NVA fired machine guns and mortars. On the other

side of the trail the same distance away, grunts fought back. The recon team hit the deck, trapped in the crossfire between the opposing forces. NVA grenades soared over and landed amongst the team. Marines scattered in all directions searching for cover, while Alan's body remained unmoved on the stretcher. He lay less than 15 feet away from the rest of the team, but the enemy fire was so intense they could not move back to him.

The grunts advanced far enough to reach the team. They worked together to suppress the NVA, now mere feet away. One infantry Marine was killed in the fight and fell ahead of the rest, a stone's throw away from Alan's body. Two squads made multiple attempts to recover Alan and their own casualty but failed. Finally, the commanding officer on the hill directed all Marines to get back to the main line. They had to move off the mountain before the NVA overran their position.

A second reaction force arrived to relieve the first one and evacuate Dong Top. The going was incredibly slow as Marines worked down the steep terrain. They reached the bottom of the hill at dawn the following morning where everyone moved back to Da Nang. Two Marine infantry companies plus the

heavy recon team lacked the numbers and firepower to overcome the NVA on Dong Top Mountain.

The contents of the cassette tape painted a vivid picture of the events surrounding Alan's death, but for David, it was still incomplete. The interviews took place before his brother's body was recovered. He remembered the funeral director refusing to open the casket at Alan's funeral, and his father's face after he'd seen the body. He remembered the words of the corpsman he'd met at the reunion when David insisted he tell him the details of what the NVA did to Alan's body. The old Doc described the terrifying details of Alan's mutilated corpse, and his disgust for the bastards who could do such things.

Over the next few years, David filled in Alan's story. He attended two more Force Recon reunions. At one point, he met in person with a member of Team Petrify who was one of the seriously wounded on the patrol. David gave him copies of the cassette tape interviews, which the Marine never knew existed. David realized that because of his research, he actually knew more of the big picture surrounding the patrol than someone who was there on the ground. In less than five years following his visit to The Wall,



**David felt he'd accomplished his mission. His brother's loss still tore at his heart. In some ways, even more so now than before, given the tragic details. Pride, however, overcame the grief.**

David felt he'd accomplished his mission. His brother's loss still tore at his heart. In some ways, even more so now than before, given the tragic details. Pride, however, overcame the grief. Alan was a loved and respected teammate within the recon community. For his actions on the patrol, Alan posthumously received a Bronze Star Medal with Valor device. As David closed the book on his research, he knew his brother's death was not in vain and was remembered by more than just him.

Nearly three decades passed before David reopened the book, beginning a second chapter on his brother's death. In 2018, David learned the name of the reaction force grunt killed in the same place as Alan. Lance Corporal Howard Ogden went down on Dong Top Mountain less than 50 feet from where Alan's body was left. Though Alan eventually returned home, Ogden's body disappeared. His status was officially listed as Killed in Action/Body Not Recovered. He posthumously received a Silver Star for his role in the battle.

David located Ogden's memorial page on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund *Wall of Faces*.

"Thank you, Marine," he wrote in the comments. "You sacrificed your life in recovering my brother's body. Sgt Alan T. Jensen, who in his first enlistment was also in 2/7. God Bless you."

David received a surprising response from a lady named Maggie Ardery.

Maggie was Ogden's older sister. Just like David, Maggie devoted considerable effort to discovering what had happened to her brother on Dong Top. Maggie's journey, however, continued to the present, as Ogden's case remained active at the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing In Action Accounting Agency (DPAA).

David called Maggie and learned of her quest to see her brother return home. He sympathized and understood her pain in ways most people never could. He committed to help Maggie with her efforts and resumed his own journey from a different perspective.

David learned of the Virtual Vietnam Archive, hosted by Texas Tech University, where he located the command chronologies of other units involved in Team Petrify's extraction. The documents revealed a broader picture and told the story of Alan's recovery a week later.

Marine Observation Squadron (VMO) 2 and Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron (HMM) 265 provided the helicopters that forced the enemy back and attempted the emergency medevacs of Team Petrify. Their efforts came at a cost. Enemy fire shot up one CH-46 so badly it was forced to crash land at the base of Dong Top. Another Huey gunship suffered similar damage and crashed nearby. Part of the reaction force sent to the mountain peeled off to secure the area around the downed aircraft. Despite the crashed choppers and enemy mortar fire into the crash site, no Marines were injured.



**Alan Jensen, right, with friend and team leader, then-Sgt Lawrence H. Livingston. Livingston, a Navy Cross recipient who went on to retire from the Marine Corps as a major general, wrote a letter to the Jensen family in the weeks following Alan's death. "He's the finest Marine I've ever known," Livingston wrote. (Photo courtesy of David Jensen)**

The first helicopter from HMM-265 attempting a medevac of Petrify's wounded on Oct. 17, however, did not fare so lucky. When the CH-46 arrived at dusk, Cpl Howard Morse lay on his stomach peering down through the "hell hole" in the center of the bird's belly as a hoist lowered painfully slowly to the ground. NVA on the ridge opened fire. Bullets passed through the thin aluminum skin of the helicopter. One found its mark and entered Morse's abdomen below his body armor. The pilot aborted the extraction, but it was already too late. Morse died in the hospital eight days later. To quantify the air wing's efforts over the



COURTESY OF MAGGIE ARDERY

COURTESY OF DAVID JENSEN

**Above: Maggie Ardery and David Jensen purchased bricks in memory of their brothers, killed in the same place on the same mission, to be included in the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Angel Fire, N.M.**

**Left: LCpl Howard Ogden Jr., fought with the reaction force from Golf Co, 2/7. He was killed during the battle to rescue Alan and Team Petrify. Ogden posthumously received a Silver Star. He was 19 years old.**





**Maggie Ardery and David Jensen met in person for the first time at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire, N.M. From the left: Maggie's daughter, Carla; Maggie Ardery; and David Jensen.**

As Alan's brick was laid down along the sidewalk, memories flooded David's consciousness. His father's face appeared as he told David of Alan's death at their childhood home. David's own face appeared, reflected in the memorial wall in D.C., as he determined to begin his journey. Over five decades of discovery led him here. He met many people who helped him along the way. He gained a new sister, one of those other siblings like him that he'd reflected on at the wall years before. He'd never imagine someone else out there might be enduring the same grief as he, losing their brother on the same mission and in the exact same place as his own.

David learned the man he knew as his big brother was no different to the Marines he served with; still a role model, a leader, and a friend. The time had still not come to close the book on the story of Team Petrify and Dong Top Mountain, only another chapter was set to close. Howard Ogden still needed to come home. Maggie's family deserved the closure. As for Alan's story, David felt whole. The healing he sought was finally found.

*Author's note: David's journey, and this story, could not have happened without the help of many people over the five decades since David set out to learn what happened to his brother. David would like to recognize the following individuals. Semper Fi, and thank you!*

*Maj Charles Wilkins, USMC (Ret), who was a corporal on Team Petrify with Alan. Wilkins was one of the Marines recorded on the original cassette tape, and David finally connected with him over 50 years later in 2020.*

*Sgt Dave Thompson, USMC, who served with First Force Recon in 1968 and 1969. Thompson was featured in another story I wrote, "The Flying Ladder." Thompson maintains his own website, containing a wealth of history on Force Recon in Vietnam. Thompson aided David in locating Maj Wilkins and orchestrated the call between them.*

*Maj Bill Picking, U.S. Army (Ret), and SgtMaj Jack Parsons, USMC (Ret), both of whom were enlisted Marines with the reaction force from Golf Co, 2/7, who battled the NVA on Dong Top Mountain and witnessed the events surrounding Alan and Howard Ogden's deaths. David just connected with them in 2022.*

**He gained a new sister, one of those other siblings like him that he'd reflected on at the wall years before.**

**He'd never imagine someone else out there might be enduring the same grief as he, losing their brother on the same mission and in the exact same place as his own.**

two-day period of Petrify's extraction, VMO-2 reported that their Hueys fired 446 rockets and 54,500 rounds of machine-gun ammo.

Golf Co, 2/7, formed the initial reaction force to rescue Petrify. The battalion also provided a reaction force to rescue the recon team that Petrify was assembled to relieve. On the same day Alan was killed, in a separate area of Dong Top Mountain, another company from 7th Marines deployed to rescue a third surrounded recon team. In the end, the jungle into which Team Petrify walked swarmed with an estimated 800 NVA, and a full battalion of Marines was needed to get all the recon teams out.

Several days later, 2/7 returned to Dong Top to search for Alan and Howard Ogden. The battalion's casualties mounted once again as grunts spread across the hill. On Oct. 24, Golf Co reached the area where the Marines went missing. Through the jungle, they saw a desecrated body tied to a tree. Mortars, grenades, and machine-gun fire greeted them as they moved to recover the body. The grunts withdrew, unable to force their way through. A squad returned the following morning to find the NVA moved out of the area overnight. They cut the binds from the tree and moved the body

back to the command post. They immediately identified the remains as a recon Marine. Ogden was nowhere to be found.

David worked with Maggie to locate Marines who served with her brother, the same way others had helped him locate recon Marines who served with Alan. They contacted veterans from 2/7 and spoke with Marines who fought on Dong Top alongside Alan and Ogden. Maggie included David on all her correspondence with the DPAA. In July 2019, a DPAA team went to Dong Top Mountain looking for information on Ogden and other missing Americans. They searched the area, but did not excavate, planning to begin those efforts at a later date. Regrettably, all DPAA field activities abruptly halted with the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. As of this writing, the excavation on Dong Top has still not been rescheduled.

In September 2020, David and Maggie met in person at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Angel Fire, N.M. Though they had been acquainted barely more than a year, they regarded each other as adopted siblings and embraced as if they were reuniting with a beloved old friend. They purchased memorial bricks engraved with the names of their brothers to be included in the memorial walkway.



## DOD Expands Military Parental Leave Program

On Jan. 4, 2023, the Department of Defense announced the expansion of the Military Parental Leave Program (MPLP) via Direct Type Memorandum (DTM) 23-001 – “Expansion of the Military Parental Leave Program.”

The expansion was made in accordance with the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 and builds on the Department’s support of military families and servicemembers by streamlining and enhancing the parental leave benefit for servicemembers. Specifically, the expansion provides parental leave to active and reserve component service members (on active duty for 12 months or more) who have given birth, adopted a child or had a child placed for adoption or long-term foster care with them. Birth parents will be granted 12 weeks of parental leave following a period of convalescent leave and non-birth parents will be granted 12 weeks of leave following the birth of their child. Adoptive parents and eligible foster parents will also be granted 12 weeks of parental leave. The MPLP is designed to allow members to care for their children while balancing the needs of their unit.

Members who were on maternity convalescent leave or caregiver leave on Dec. 27, 2022 (before the new policy went into effect) and had not used up their leave will transition to leave under the new policy without any loss of benefit and will receive the expanded benefit. For example, birth parents on six weeks of maternity convalescent leave or six weeks of primary caregiver leave as of Dec. 27, will, with the transition to the new policy, receive a combined total of 18 weeks of non-chargeable leave following the birth of their child.

In the future, under the new policy, the amount of convalescent leave birth parents receive will be determined on an individual basis, and the amount of parental leave will be a standard 12 weeks. Members (other than birth parents) on caregiver leave, e.g., a father on three weeks of secondary caregiver leave, as of Dec. 27, will also transition to leave under the new policy and receive a combined total of 12 weeks of parental leave. The transition to the expanded parental leave benefit is intended to occur without interruption.

The leave can be taken by both birth

and non-birth parents and must be administered in accordance with the policies and procedures outlined in the DTM. The expansion of the MPLP, which applies to all eligible service members as of Jan. 4, 2023, takes precedence over previous DOD issuances and service regulations.

For more information, read MARADMIN 051/23, signed Jan. 30.

DOD Press Release

## Free Career Training Program Offers Benefits for Transitioning Military Families

Syracuse University’s D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF/D’Aniello Institute) has turned a campus initiative into a national model for success in career transition-related training programs for the military community. The D’Aniello Institute’s Onward to Opportunity (O2O) program is a career



training program that provides professional certification and employee support services at no cost to transitioning service members, veterans and military spouses.

Based on recent findings, the program is proven to have a significantly positive impact on the success rate of transitioning service members. The Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness at Pennsylvania State University recently finished evaluating more than three years of data on the O2O program. The study concluded that O2O graduates experience a significant increase in post-service em-

ployment opportunities and success. The two-part report found that O2O graduates were twice as likely to find better employment opportunities and, on average, earn \$7,000 more than their peers who did not take part in the program. For those enlisted servicemembers with a pay grade of E-6 or below, the program shows even better results with an average starting salary \$13,000 higher than their peers.

Onward to Opportunity is available at no cost for servicemembers on active duty within 180 days of separation, veterans, military-connected spouses and members of the National Guard and the reserves. O2O offers more than 40 professional industry-standard certifications leading to in-demand careers. The program offers beginner and entry-level certifications to help launch a new career or intermediate and advanced certifications to help the experienced professional take the next step in advancing their career. A few examples of available certifications through the program include Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Project Management Professional (PMP), and Six Sigma Green Belt.

Those interested in learning more about the O2O program or applying for one of the 40+ professional pathways can visit the Onward to Opportunity website for application procedures and to review frequently asked questions. The program requires an assessment to gauge the participant’s interest in the business management and/or information technology training tracks. The application process also takes into consideration the participant’s education, professional experience and general interest, as well as skills related to our partners’ employment opportunities.

Due to current volume of requests and required planning processes, there is currently a two- to three-month waiting period for those interested in starting an O2O course. Upon submission of the Online Interest Form, interested applicants can expect to hear from a member of the IVMF’s team to continue the application process for a future cohort or request additional information regarding program eligibility with alternative options. For more information, visit <https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/programs/career-training/>.

VA News





# Pollywog to Shellback



LEATHERNECK FILE PHOTO

**USS Missouri (BB-63) is like a floating carnival as 350 Marine and Navy shellbacks initiate 1,500 pollywogs.**

By Cpl Donald M. Edgemon, USMC

**S**omeplace beneath the broad, heaving breast of the South Atlantic, Neptunus Rex, god of the sea, checked his log for approaching ships and discovered USS *Missouri* (BB-63) sailing the ocean at 25 knots in the direction of the equator. The king's henchman, Davey Jones, had kept his eye on the "Mighty Mo" from the time she left Rio de Janeiro, for aboard the States-bound battlewagon were 1,500 pollywogs, among them the President of the United States.

The Mo had turned her churning fantail on the port of Rio some days before. The old salts aboard had done a lot of chuckling in anticipation of President Harry Truman's entry into the kingdom of the grizzled old ruler of the deep. If the chief executive suspected anything, he didn't show it. Neither did any other member of his party. They chatted amiably about their vacation in Brazil. Each felt a little more secure in the knowledge that the President had won his first victory in the organization of Western Hemispheric



**Nyophytes have a rugged crossing when King Neptune takes command**



**Right: First Lady Bess Truman, left, watches the initiation from the throne alongside Neptune and Amphitrite.**

defense. It had been a fine trip in every possible way.

But strange things were going on aboard *Missouri*. Behind the yawning ventilators, in the galleys and in the holds, Marines and Sailors clumsily hemstitched large pieces of green and yellow calico. A special detail shredded lengths of yellow rope and combed it out like hair. Back in his castle, Neptune, Chief Machinist J.H. Herrington, winked at his wife, Amphitrite, Marine Sergeant Anthony J. Chiban, who ordered her royal nymphs to ready the king's ceremonial garb. The king fieldstripped his trident, greased it with octopus oil and shined it with seaweed. Preparations were being made for one of the oldest ceremonies in sea tradition—the initiation of pollywogs into the Royal Order of Shellbacks.

The night before the *Mo* reached the Great Circle, everything aboard was set for no pollywog's good. Shellbacks, the boys who have at least one equator crossing under their belts, paced the decks grinning from ear to ear. The canvas ducking pools filled with briny seawater glistened in the moonlight. Davey Jones came aboard and inspected the pain-making machinery and found it to the king's liking before disappearing again.

The next day when *Missouri* was reported by her navigator to be “on the line,” Davey appeared again, but his agreeable mood had now vanished. He commanded the officer of the deck to tell the captain to surrender his ship to King Neptuneus Rex and party. The king's flag, a skull and crossbones, was run up the halyard as he boarded wearing a crown and carrying his trident. The blushing Amphitrite followed, unable to hide “her” deck ape walk and the pair of inflated life preservers which “she” wore.

The skipper was introduced to the rope-haired wife of the king, and he propitiously complimented her in compliance with seafaring custom:

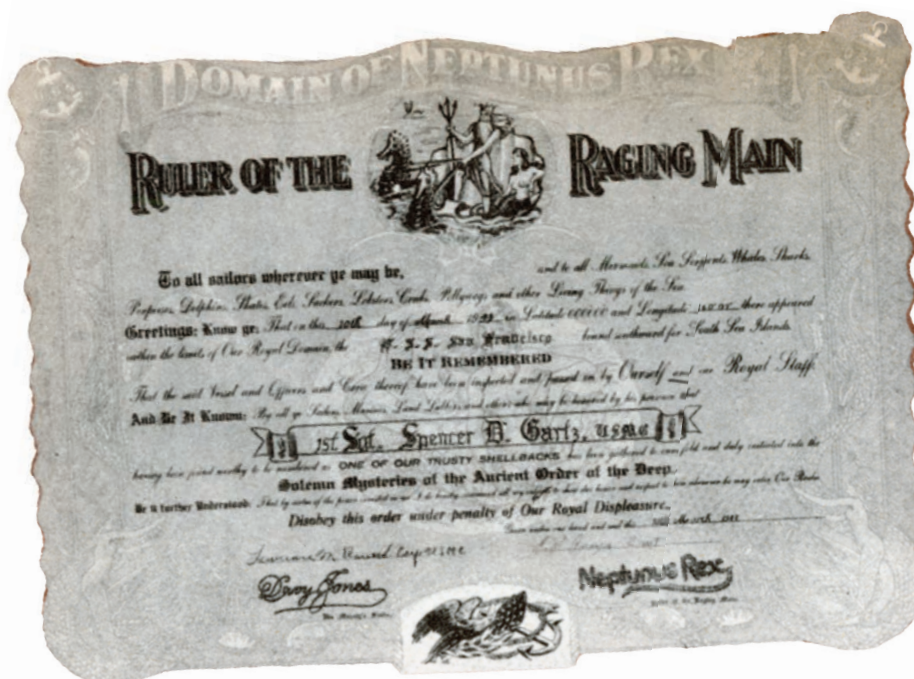
“Ah! Mrs. Neptune looks even younger than when I first saw her.”

“Well, she's not!” Neptune snarled. “She's old as hell and drinks like a fish.”

The king and queen took their places on the royal throne and the retinue's royal prosecutor, Marine Master Sergeant Zigmund Wacławski, called for the first pollywog offender. President Harry Truman preserved his “Missouri Waltz”



LEATHERNECK FILE PHOTO





smile and pleaded guilty to the stated charges.

“You have been indicted as a vile land-lubber and a pollywog in that, knowing full well that there are no party politics in this absolute monarchy, you are guilty of practicing the same; this crime being further aggravated by you’re being a Democrat.”

The President spent the rest of the day passing out autographs to the shellbacks aboard. He was made to furnish Neptune’s personal staff with Corona cigars for the remainder of the trip home.

The punishment for Margaret Truman, the president’s daughter, for being among the uninitiated was to lead *Missouri*’s crew in “Anchor’s Aweigh,” which she did with great gusto. Mrs. Truman was granted amnesty and honored with the title, “First Lady of the Deep.” The initiation ceremony which followed for novice members of the Mo’s crew made the presidential family thankful that a particular man from *Missouri* was the chief executive of the U.S.

For example, when Neptune called big Jon Steelman, the President’s special assistant, the king’s gruesome battery of deck apes squirted a nasty concoction of lemon extract and quinine into his mouth from a foot-long syringe. Next, they placed him on an “operating” table and urged him to confess his sins against the royal order by prodding him with a charged scalpel. They ran him through a paddling machine, up an electrically wired stepladder, down a greased slide and into the ducking pool.

When Steelman emerged, he was happy to declare himself a full-fledged and ever-obedient shellback.

With festivities over for the big-wigs, Neptune ordered initiations begun for the lesser fry—well over 1,000 Sailors who were voyaging over the earth’s watery middle for the first time. What had gone before was merely prelude. The ceremonies continued for four hours. Pollywogs were running around the ship half dressed, goaded to distraction. Some who tried to escape were hunted out by Neptune’s bears and returned to the scene of torture.

As if Neptune’s imps could not dream up enough to embarrass the inductees, a devil appeared from the king’s own retinue of torture makers to direct even more “excruciating” ceremony. The polly-



**The royal prosecutor, MSgt Zigmund Waclawski, announces the attendance of President Harry Truman during the ceremony aboard USS *Missouri*.**

LEATHERNECK FILE PHOTO



## Ceremonial costumes and various torture devices provide hilarity during Neptune's age-old ritual

wogs who were forced to kiss the royal baby's belly found it plastered with mustard, castor oil and grease. The royal dentist syringed saltwater into the newcomers' noses, massaged their faces with molasses and flour and fed them stomach pills made of saltwater and soap. The royal barber shaved them with a wooden razor. Occasionally a selected subject was shot out of the chair by a spring contraption and went sprawling into the canvas pool. Some were aimed at tanks full of week-old garbage and oil.

After hours of hectic hilarity at day's end, many of the shellbacks were more tired than the pollywogs they had initiated. It was one of the biggest affairs that the Mighty Mo had ever seen. Of the others conducted aboard her, most of them had been small, and during the war the big battlegwagon was much too busy for such tomfoolery.

As an Italian god, Neptune dates back to one of the most deity-ridden of civilizations, the Roman Empire. He has had his counterpart in many other civilizations including the Greek and the Norse. The

symbol of his kingship was the three-tined spear, and the source of his power was inherent in the perils of the sea itself. It was believed that after shattering rocks he could place them in the paths of unsuspecting vessels. For those who did not propitiate him, he could cook up a storm that would tear the rigging from a sailing vessel like so much matchwood. On the other hand, where his ceremonies were properly carried out, he could be a protective and benevolent god.

In Greek mythology, Neptune's counterpart, Poseidon, delayed for 20 years the return of Odysseus from the Trojan wars. He was not only the chief of the water deities, but also the creator of the horse and patron of horse racing. His own personal conveyance was a horse-drawn chariot in which he rode over the seas. His very presence made the water mysteriously calm.

The Vikings, probably the most venturesome seamen who ever lived, feared Neptune as they feared no other god. Black bulls and horses were sacrificed to soothe him before the start of a voyage.

Usually, they were thrown into the sea so that the king could see them as he travelled about his kingdom which spread over the entire floor of the ocean. These same ceremonies were passed on to the early seagoing Angles, Saxons and Normans.

Possibly the utilitarian value of the ceremony as it is received in navies of the world today has been lost. When men learned to build better ships, they learned that they could outlive the severest of storms whether they appealed to Neptune or not. Likewise, as seamanship became something of a profession with men trained in it either by formal courses or through a prerequisite apprenticeship, it was no longer necessary to drag the novice sailor through a fathom of water with a rope around his neck to discover how well he was equipped for his trade.

The Royal Order of Shellbacks is today the Sailor's honorary union. The seaman who doesn't belong to it hasn't been around, and that, in the life of a tar, is the world's worst stigma. 🦑

# Are You Ready?



**Mike & Kay Ross**

Albert E. Shockey Detachment #960  
Kokomo, Indiana



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# In Memoriam

Compiled by Nancy S. Lichtman

**Bobby Burch**, 96, of Walters, Okla. He enlisted in 1944 and served in the Pacific with 3rdMarDiv. He saw action on Guam, Iwo Jima and Saipan. After the war he worked in the family's machine shop for 20 years.

**Col Walter Cunningham**, 90, of Houston, Texas. He was an astronaut who flew into space on Apollo 7, the first flight in the Apollo program. Before joining NASA in 1963, he was a Marine Corps fighter pilot who served in the Korean War. Assigned to the VMF(N)-513 "Flying Nightmares," he completed 54 missions. He had a master's and doctorate in physics.

**Michael D. "Mick" Dergo**, of East Moline, Ill. He was a Marine who served in Vietnam. After the war, he was a teacher and coach for more than 30 years.

**LtGen Emerson Gardner**, 70, of Honolulu, Hawaii. He was a Marine Corps aviator who served for 37 years. During his career he accrued 4,300 flight hours and was a presidential helicopter pilot in HMX-1. He had numerous operational deployments to the Middle East, Europe and Japan and commanded a helicopter squadron during Operation Desert Storm. He also commanded 26th MEU (SOC) for two deployments leading security operations in the former Yugoslavia. Other assignments included Assistant Deputy Commandant for Aviation and Deputy Commandant of the Marine Corps for Programs and Resources.

**BGen John H. Gary III**, 90, of Tampa, Fla. He was commissioned a second lieutenant after graduating from VMI in 1955. He was a tanker who served as a company commander and in the G-3 during his tour in Vietnam with 3rdMarDiv in 1966. In 1970 he served a second tour in Vietnam as a senior intelligence analyst. After completing an assignment as an assistant naval attaché in Canberra, Australia, he was the commanding officer of 2nd Tank Bn, 2ndMarDiv at Camp Lejeune. He later served as the commanding general of the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade.

He was a graduate of Naval War College and National War College. His awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal and oak leaf cluster in lieu of second award and the Bronze Star with combat "V" and gold star in lieu of second award.

**Capt Wilbert R. Gaul**, 100, of Honeybrook, Pa. He served during

WW II and the Korean War. His awards include the Purple Heart. He was a pharmacist who owned his own drug store in Pennsylvania.

**Erica Gonzalez**, 47, of San Diego, Calif. She was an eight-year veteran of the Marine Corps. She had a degree in communications and was a news producer for the ABC affiliate in San Diego.

**Harold D. Henry**, 96, of Stillwater, Okla. He served during the closing days of WW II and was assigned to the MarDet of USS *Wasp* (CV-7). After the war, he earned a bachelor's degree and master's degree and had a career as a minister.

**Cpl Myron E. Kampfer**, 97, of Santa Rosa, Calif. He enlisted after Pearl Harbor was attacked and served in the Pacific. He was wounded in action during the fighting on Saipan. After the war, he worked in the automotive manufacturing industry, eventually transitioning to manufacturing and logistics for North American and Rockwell. He was a logistics manager for the production of the second stage of the Saturn V rocket, used in NASA's Apollo program.

**Gary L. Lindner**, 84, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted after his high school graduation and served several years. He had a career as an electrician.

**Betty Livingston**, 99, of Saint Paul, Minn. She was a Motor T Marine who served in Hawaii during WW II.

**Col Doug McCullough**, 77, of New Bern, N.C. He was a Judge Advocate in the Marine Corps Reserve for 29 years following three years on active duty. He was a prosecutor with the Department of Justice in Philadelphia and later was counsel to the Senate Ethics Committee in Washington, D.C.

**James F. McElroy**, 94, of Forked River, N.J. He enlisted in the Navy during WW II and was a Seabee. During the Korean War, he served in the Marine Corps. He later made a career with the New York City Department of Corrections in The Bronx. He also worked for the New York Yankees as a scout.

**William R. Miller**, 89, of De Pere, Wis. He left college to enlist in the Marine Corps and served for two years. He later completed school and began a career in social work, eventually working as director of social services in Brown County, Wis.

**Clayton Narveson**, 98, of Maryville, Tenn. He enlisted in 1942 and served in the Pacific during WW II. He saw action

during the Battle of Tarawa and on Iwo Jima.

**John Otto**, 97, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He enlisted in 1944 and was assigned to the 5thMarDiv during the Battle of Iwo Jima. He remained in the Marine Corps Reserve through the Korean War. He had a career in radio and TV broadcasting and advertising in the Midwest.

**LtCol Clarence R. "Bob" Perry**, 91, of Dayton, Ohio. He was a Marine helicopter pilot who completed three tours in Vietnam. During his career he commanded two squadrons. His awards include two Distinguished Flying Crosses and 27 Air Medals. After his retirement from the Marine Corps, he completed law school and began a career as a criminal defense attorney. He also was involved in local government and was elected mayor of Stanton, Mich.

**Bernard Ruchin**, 98, of Long Island, N.Y. He enlisted during WW II. After the war, he made a career in law enforcement in New York. He was called back to active duty during the Korean War.

**Arno W. Schroeder**, 97, of Spearfish, S.D. He was assigned to the 6thMarDiv and saw action on Okinawa. After the surrender, he served in China.

**Sgt Willis H. Stuart**, 91, of Searcy, Ark. He served with the 1st MAW in the Korean War. After the war he had a career with Southwestern Transportation Company. He was an avid photographer and artist.

**Richard C. Sylvester**, 87, of Salem, Ore. He enlisted in 1954. After his discharge, he completed college and worked as a journalist.

**SSgt Ervin A. Tate**, 97, of Greensboro, N.C. He served in WW II and the Korean War. He was assigned to VMF(N)-541.

**Sgt Jack Terry**, 92, of Hamilton, Ohio. He enlisted when he was 17 and served in the Korean War. He saw action at Inchon and the Chosin Reservoir.

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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](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org). 🍷



# 2023 MARINE CORPS ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION GIVING DAY



The Marine Corps Association Foundation's 2023 Giving Day will be held on **Tuesday, May 9th.**

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## Reunions

• **Marine Corps Disbursing Assn.**, May 21-25, Louisville, Ky. Contact MGySgt Kevin Gascon, USMC (Ret), (760) 458-2655, usmcdisbursers@hotmail.com, www.usmcdisbursers.com.

• **Co A, 3rd Engineer Bn/BLT 1/9 (RVN, 1970-1971)**, is planning a reunion. Contact Gene Spanos, (847) 532-2963, genethemarine@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Co D, 4-73**, June 15-18, Arlington, Va. Contact Col Bill Anderson, USMCR (Ret), (540) 850-4213, binche57@yahoo.com, or Col Bob Donaghue, USMCR (Ret), (617) 840-0267, ip350haven@comcast.net.

• **Plt 2064, San Diego, 1965**, is planning a reunion. Contact Gary A. Gruenwald, (434) 609-3433, usmcgman74@aol.com.

• **Hotel Co, 2/7 (RVN 1965-1970)**, June 8-11, Oklahoma City, Okla. Contact Jerry Norris, (940) 631-7233, postalm16@hotmail.com.

• **TBS Class 3-67/41st OCC**, Oct. 26-29, Arlington, Va. Contact Paul Disario, (559) 273-9549, pdisario@comcast.net.

• **East Coast Drill Instructor's Association**, May 4-7, Parris Island, S.C., Contact Kenneth Miller, (828) 499-0224, usmcpidi@charter.net, for more info visit www.parrisislanddi.org.

• **1st Marine Division Assn.**, August 13-20, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact June Cormier, (760) 763-3268, June.oldbreed@fmda.us.

• **Holy Loch, all personnel, all eras**, May 10-14, Dunoon, Scotland. Contact Gerry Haight, CharlieHaight@yahoo.com.

• **USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn.**, Sept. 13-18, Colorado Springs, Colo. Contact John Wear, (719) 495-5998, johnwear2@verizon.net.

• **Marine Corps Engineer Assn. (MCEA)**, Sept. 18-20, Branson, Mo. Contact LtCol George Carlson, USMC (Ret), (931) 307-9094, treasurer@marcor



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• **USMC Scout Sniper Assn.**, Aug. 18-20, Quantico, Va. Contact Tim Parkhurst, (833) 976-4737, reunion@scoutsniper.org.

## Mail Call

• Jonathan Arms, (703) 843-6022, jon@arscomm.com, is looking to hear from **Mark A. Rankin**, last stationed with VMGR-252, MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., in 1994.

## Wanted

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

• Doug Stevens, yellowboat663@

yahoo.com, is looking for a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 261, Parris Island, 1968**.

• Jay Campbell, jaybirdpisc@gmail.com, is looking for a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 3030, Parris Island, 1968**.

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







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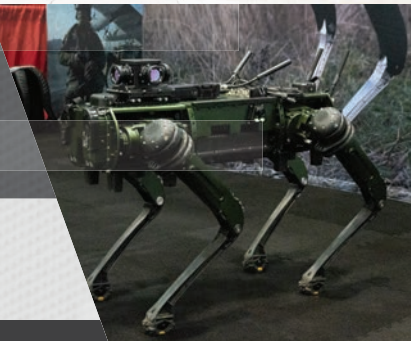
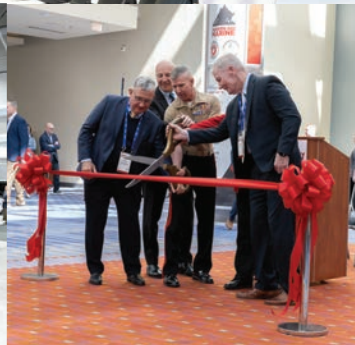
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# Saved Round

By Nancy S. Lichtman

**REMEMBERING A PEACEKEEPER**—The *Arleigh Burke*-class guided missile destroyer USS *Higgins* (DDG-76) (below) transits the Pacific Ocean while underway on March 20, 2022. The ship, commissioned April 24, 1999, was named for Colonel William R. “Rich” Higgins, who was captured and later killed by the terrorists in Beirut, Lebanon, in 1988. Higgins had been serving in Lebanon with a United Nations peacekeeping contingency.

Members of the terrorist group Hezbollah took then-Lieutenant Colonel Higgins hostage on Feb. 17, 1988. He was declared dead on July 6, 1990, although the exact date of his death is unknown. His remains eventually were recovered and returned to the United States, and he was buried at Quantico National Cemetery on Dec. 30, 1991. He was promoted to colonel during his time in captivity.

In what was likely his last interview before he was captured, Higgins spoke to writer and psychologist Rona Fields who was in Lebanon working on a story. She later wrote that Higgins talked with her about the risks of being stationed in Beirut and his strong belief in the importance of the mission for America and rest of the world. According to Fields, Higgins told her during that 1988 interview “that leadership meant ‘taking the point.’”

During Higgins’ distinguished career as an infantry officer, he completed two combat tours in Vietnam; the first was in 1968 when he was a platoon commander for Company C, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines. He received the Bronze Star with combat “V” for his actions on Jan. 19, 1968, during that assignment. Then-Second Lieutenant Higgins led his Marines to relieve another platoon which was taking heavy fire and in danger of being overrun. “Upon reaching the battle area, he aggressively led his platoon in an assault through a bunker complex along the right



NANCY S. LICHTMAN



FILE PHOTO

side of the enemy positions. Boldly advancing through enemy ... mortar fire, he moved his platoon forward in the enemy fortifications and repeatedly exposed himself to hostile fire as he directed and encouraged his men in systematically destroying numerous positions within the bunker complex,” according to the award citation.

Higgins returned to Vietnam in 1972 as an infantry battalion advisor to the Vietnamese Marine Corps. He wore the “Tiger Stripe” camouflage uniform pictured above during that assignment. The uniform is currently on display in the Marine Wing of Roosevelt Hall at National War College, at Fort Lesley J. McNair in Washington, D.C. Higgins was a 1985 graduate of the school.

Col Higgins was posthumously awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal and the Purple Heart in 1992 and the Prisoner of War Medal in 2003. 🇺🇸



MC2 RYRE ARCIAGA, USN



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