

NOVEMBER 2022

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# LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

**Leading the Way:  
Gen Berger is  
Focusing on the  
Corps' Future**

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**Happy 247th  
Birthday,  
Marines!**



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NATION DURING TIMES OF PEACE AND WAR,  
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As earlier this year marked the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Midway, *Leatherneck* recognizes and honors the sole Medal of Honor recipient, Capt Richard E. Fleming, a Marine aviator who fought in the battle between aircraft carriers of the U.S. and Japan in World War II.

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**COVER:** Gen David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, talks to Marines during the MARFORPAC change of command ceremony on Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, MCB Hawaii, Sept. 7. Photo by Sgt Kathryn Adams, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$2 (for mailing costs) to Leatherneck Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

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## Letter of the Month

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

First and foremost, the Letter of the Month in the September issue not only was deeply spellbinding to me, but it also brought goosebumps and a tear to my tired old eyes. It makes me a bit sad that so many veterans of World War II are now being lionized for their past service when we collectively had more than 75 years to do so. Now that most of our brave WW II and Korean War veterans are guarding the gates of heaven, it would have been far more spectacular to have them recognized and their stories recorded and published much earlier.

I belong to and am deeply involved with the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. Our 500-member organization has a history project where we record and publish our Marine member's past. We have

a 48-page quarterly magazine that is full of personal stories and photographs from our Vietnam service. We record hour-long interviews during our biennial reunions. We also conduct telephone podcasts. Several of our publications are archived in the Library of Congress and the Texas Tech University Vietnam Archives. One of our adopted sayings is, "When an old person dies, a library burns to the ground." We are trying mightily to prevent our past from being lost and forgotten.

Many years ago, Marine Vietnam veteran Don Whitton owned and operated the mail-order company called Sgt Grit based in Oklahoma City. One feature that Sgt Grit's website had was called the Marine Bulletin Board. It was a place where Marines could go online and discuss just about anything.

Of the many Marine veterans from all eras who participated in the bulletin board were two Iwo Jima Marines. One of those gentlemen was Bill Enders. After the war I was told Bill went back to Missouri and took over the operation of his family farm.

Bill had a good Marine buddy who he served with and fought side-by-side with on Iwo Jima. That buddy went back to his own family farm in Nebraska. Bill and his buddy exchanged Christmas and birthday cards for decades but being dirt and cattle farmers, they could not get away to reunite in person.

Many years later, Bill was finally able to have his two sons take over the family farm and he retired. A few weeks after retirement Bill decided to go visit his old Iwo Jima buddy. He decided to simply show up without calling ahead. He pulled into the driveway and his buddy's wife came out to greet him. The first words out of her mouth were, "Charley died two weeks ago. I am sorry that you missed him."

Bill told me that story and said, "John, do not wait. Have your reunions and get-togethers now before it is too late."

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



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# IS FOR VETERAN

When we're thanked for our service  
we reflect on how we served.

The way we had to break in boots.  
The times we gathered up our nerve.

The nicknames that made us laugh.  
The smell of chili mac MREs.

The pride we felt with that first oath.  
The friendships that came to be.

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it's not applause that's in my sight.

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to see who's on my left and right.



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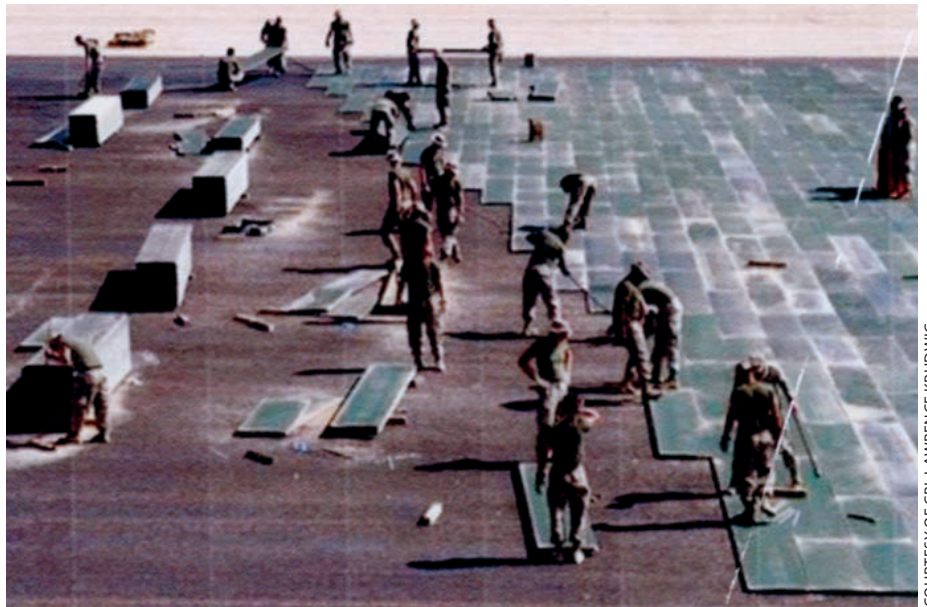


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COURTESY OF CPL LAWRENCE KRUDWIG

**While preparing a surface for a runway and taxiway by laying down MA-2 matting in Chu Lai Vietnam in 1965, it became clear that dirt would have to be hauled in to make a compactable surface on which to lay the matting.**

## First Real SATS Field

This is a follow-up to Sgt Raymond Gomez's letter in the August issue titled "SATS Not to Be Forgotten." I, too, have been somewhat disappointed that the SATS (Short Airfield for Tactical Support) system has not received the recognition I think it rightfully deserves in various Marine and related publications. SATS was a creative solution to a significant problem—it is equivalent to an aircraft carrier on land.

In early 1965, the decision was made to introduce a Division-level force of Marines into the northern part of Vietnam known as I Corps. Air support was to be a part of that buildup that became known as III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF). At a meeting in Honolulu in 1965, the Commanding General of Fleet Marine Forces Pacific, Lieutenant General Victor Krulak, was informed by Pacific Air Forces that Da Nang was already operating above its available space and resources, and it would take 11 months or more to expand it to meet the Corps' needs or to build another air base. LtGen Krulak briefly described the SATS concept and announced that within 90 days of being given the order to proceed, he would have an airfield operational at Chu Lai to provide the needed close air support. He further stated that within 25 days of personnel and equipment being off-loaded at the new site, operations would begin. His statements were received with considerable skepticism. That date was missed by 24 hours, not because the field was not ready, but because bad weather kept the aircraft from leaving the Philippines. Within a couple of hours of

the first flight landing at Chu Lai, they were armed, briefed, and flew their first of many missions.

Sgt Gomez noted doing some 10-12 catches a day. At Chu Lai, that would be a slow morning or afternoon. That did not take into account the launches, mainly using JATO at the time, until the runway reached about 5,000-plus feet. Night operations were limited because runway and taxiway lights and others were favorite targets of Viet Cong snipers.

The location of this SATS was the right location for that purpose. It got the least amount of rain in Vietnam. On the other hand, it was a poor choice geologically because of the sand, which was dry as a bone. It was like constantly walking or driving in a foot of powdered snow. If it had wheels, it went nowhere until dirt was hauled in from seven miles away to build roads.

I was a Marine weather aerologist and personally measured temperatures in the vicinity of the air strip at 115 degrees and humidity around 50 percent. The density altitude, even though Chu Lai was at sea level, was more than 5,000 feet or like being in Denver, Colo. This created significant problems for aircraft and helicopter payloads. Excluding fuel, the most common liquid consumed was water and salt pills. Heat exhaustion and heat stroke took its toll. I personally lost 60 pounds in three months. The source of all that humidity was the bay on the east side of the base. The only positive thing is that it was great for swimming, but it was as warm as a hot tub. If the war had turned out different, Chu Lai would have been the Riviera of the Corps.



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After a brief attempt to prepare a surface for the runway and taxiways by laying down some of the MA-2 matting, it became clear this sand would not be easily graded or compacted. What little matting had been installed had to be quickly removed and dirt hauled in 24/7 to make a compactable surface on which to lay the matting. This required an all-hands effort to put in a few hours a day laying the matting along with keeping the rest of the base running and growing as shown in the picture on page 4.

Because of the Marines “can do” and “will do” attitude and ingenuity, that unbelievable deadline expressed by the Pacific Air Forces was met. Chu Lai went on to become a significant air base. The MA-2 matting runways eventually reached 8,000 feet, thus eliminating the need for JATO and catapult system. The SATS matting runway and taxiways were replaced a couple years later by concrete and operations management removed from the Marines.

Let’s remember the first real SATS and tell more of the story of the people that made it happen.

Cpl Lawrence Krudwig  
USMC, 1961-1965  
Springfield, Mo.



COURTESY OF RAY ORRAND

**Medal of Honor recipient Hershel W. “Woody” Williams, left, poses for a photo with Ray Orrand.**

#### **Readers Pay Tribute to CWO-4 Hershel W. Williams**

While serving as Ohio State Director for Selective Service, I had the honor and privilege to meet my first Medal of Honor recipient, CWO-4 Hershel W. “Woody” Williams. His outgoing personality was so refreshing and his willingness to talk to anyone is a tribute to his public service. When he noticed my Marine Corps

lapel pin, the true meaning of Semper Paratus became an instant bond. I never felt so humble ... and never felt so proud to be a Marine. May he rest in peace.

Ray Orrand  
USMC, 1967-1970  
Stow, Ohio

Hershel “Woody” Williams was slated to be the Grand Marshal of our Memorial Day Parade in Bozeman, Mont., this year. I was supposed to have the honor of driving him in my 1945 USMC Willys Jeep. Unfortunately, he was unable to attend. I was, and am, broken-hearted. I was so looking forward to the honor and swapping sea stories—his from Iwo Jima and mine from Korea.

Enclosed with this letter is my check for a copy of the September cover of *Leatherneck*. It will be framed and will hang in my “I love me” room.

Also, thank you for featuring my experience in Sea Stories in the same issue. *Leatherneck* is my most favored magazine. You folks do an outstanding job. Keep up the good work.

Sgt C.C. Westlake, USMC (Ret)  
Bozeman, Mont.

I want to commend *Leatherneck* magazine for honoring Medal of Honor

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recipient Hershel “Woody” Williams in the September issue. I had the pleasure of meeting Woody at the dedication of the Gold Star Mothers Memorial at the Southern Arizona Veterans’ Memorial Cemetery located in Sierra Vista, Ariz., on Oct. 5, 2019. I was part of the delegation from the Wild West Detachment Marine Corps League in Tombstone, Ariz., who attended the dedication.

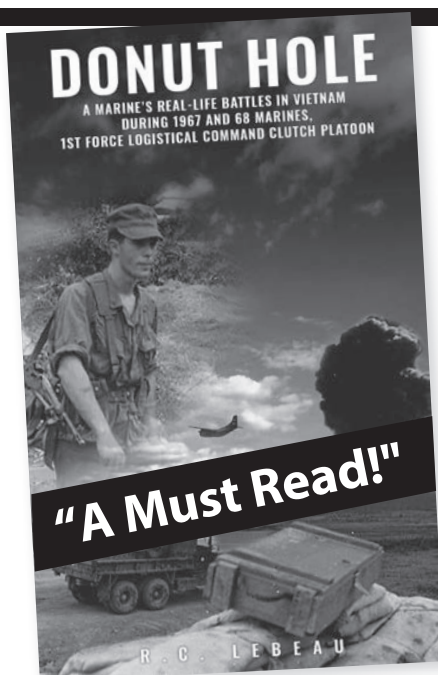
I told Woody that I was honored to meet him, and he said the honor was his. He also thanked me for my service—I was humbled.

Woody was a pure Marine and will be missed.

GySgt William F. “Bill” Pakinkis  
USMC/USMCR, 1962-1984  
Tombstone, Ariz.

### Honoring Women in Our Services

The article, “Her Story: Military Women’s Memorial Invites Servicewomen to Take Their ‘Rightful and Visible’ Place,” in the August issue was a great read. It’s nice to know they have our backs. I’ll probably never see the beautiful memorial featured across pages 18 and 19, being a West Coast veteran. I do know some of the East Coast memorials and historical sites are nice and well kept. I think it is great that women volunteered and served



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COURTESY OF PETER M. WALKER



COURTESY OF PETER M. WALKER

**Peter Walker has kept his GG Greene can opener, right, for more than 70 years. Left is the US Speaker can opener.**

all branches of the military and civilian agencies.

I do read and enjoy *Leatherneck* every month having recently reupped for two more years. It's a great magazine!

John Sanchez  
USN, 1961-1966  
Hanford, Calif.

### Ham and Lima Beans

I just finished reading the article "Food for Thought: War is Difficult Enough, Even Without Ham and Lima Beans" in the September issue. It brought back some

great memories and made me roar with laughter. I absolutely love both ham and lima beans to this day at 88 years old. I even like the C-rations version and the canned scrambled eggs. When I was in the field I ate like a king. I had little to no competition for those dishes. Hell, if I was lucky, I could score some of the more popular items and trade them for more ham and lima beans.

Dr. Roger Peterson  
USMC, USMCR, 1952-1968  
Ypsilanti, Mich.

In the September issue is an article called, "Food for Thought." My can opener, which I've had for more than 70 years, is marked "GG Greene." We always referred to it that way. Years later one came out marked "US Speaker." Now it's known as the "P-38."

Peter M. Walker  
Welches, Ore.

### Dissent Done Right

The article, "Dissent Done Right: Military Leaders, Doctrine Encourage Criticism" in the September issue was well-written. I agree that the best course for expressing dissent is through proper channels. Political leaders often put our military in difficult situations. The result can be inadequate planning and poor execution. Our involvement in conflicts around the globe is littered with mistakes and tragedies. A few come to mind: the 1975 Mayaguez incident, 41 killed in action (KIA); the 1983 Lebanon Marine Headquarters bombing, 241 KIA; and the 1993 Blackhawk down action in Somalia, 20 KIA.

The bullhorn of social media only serves the interest of those who want to turn a tragedy into political demagoguery. With 17 years of service, Lieutenant  
**[continued on page 68]**

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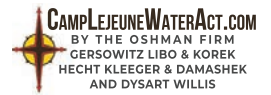
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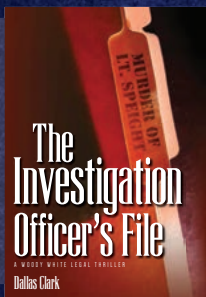
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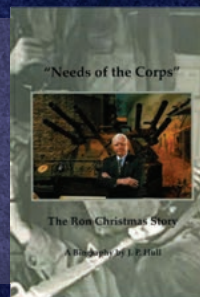
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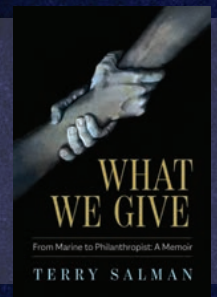
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# SEMPER FIDELIS

10 NOVEMBER 2022



## A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

Seventy years ago, Army Major General Frank E. Lowe was quoted as saying, “The safest place in Korea was right behind a platoon of Marines. Lord, how they could fight.” That testimonial rings as true now as it did then and will remain so tomorrow. As we celebrate the 247th anniversary of our Corps’ founding, we reflect on nearly two and a half centuries of exceptional prowess, while also taking objective stock of where we are today and how we will prepare for future battlefields. Our birthday provides us a chance to focus on the one thing common to our success in the past, present, and future: the individual Marine. Victories are not won because of technology or equipment, but because of our Marines.

Since 1775, Marines have fought courageously and tenaciously in every conflict our country has faced. Through the Revolution, the Spanish-American War, World Wars in Europe and the Pacific, conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, and operations in the Middle East, Marines consistently earned a reputation as the world’s elite fighting force. We inherit and take pride in this reputation, evolved over time by Marines acquitting themselves with honor and distinction on every battlefield in every clime and place. Battlefields change, and Marines have always adapted to the environment and the changing character of war—but the reason we fight and win is immutable. It’s the individual warfighters, and their love for each other, that makes our Corps as formidable a force today as it has been for the past 247 years. It’s our ethos and our unapologetic resolve to be the most capable and lethal fighting force that sets us apart from the rest.

Current events around the world remind us that peace is not guaranteed. While we are justifiably proud of our past and pay tribute to the remarkable warfighters who came before us, we understand that the stories of yesterday cannot secure our freedom tomorrow. We must be ready to respond when our Nation calls. It falls on Marines who are in uniform today to write the next chapter of our Corps. The solemn responsibility



of maintaining our illustrious warfighting legacy rests upon your shoulders. I know that you are up to that task. The battlefields of tomorrow are uncertain. The future characteristics of warfare are uncertain. But one thing is certain—wherever Marines are called, they will fight and win—today, tomorrow, and into the future.

Happy 247th Birthday, Marines!

Semper Fidelis,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "D. H. Berger".

David H. Berger  
General, U.S. Marine Corps  
Commandant of the Marine Corps



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**RANDY O. FELDER**  
OEF Veteran

// War, Diplomacy, and Society helped me understand the complexities of war and how war taps into every aspect of domestic life. This program also helped me build my research skills and helped me get closer to being a professor of history. //



**CHRISTEN KADKHODAI**  
Foreign Service Officer

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**Pictured:**  
A fragment of the Berlin Wall resides in Chapman University's Liberty Plaza, reminding students that the fight to stay free is central to the American spirit and to the human spirit.

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LCPL KIRA DUCATO, USMC

**Marines with VMM-262 (Rein), and CLB-31, 31st MEU, secure a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle to a CH-53E aboard Expeditionary Mobile Base USS Miguel Keith (ESB-5) during a helicopter support team exercise in the Philippine Sea, Aug. 8.**

## PHILIPPINE SEA

### 31st MEU Conducts JLTV Shore-to-Ship Heavy Lift

Marines from 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) logistics combat element, Combat Logistics Battalion (CLB) 31, worked alongside the MEU's aviation combat element, Marine Medium Tiltrotor (VMM) Squadron 262 (Reinforced), to successfully execute a shore-to-ship transport of a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) with a CH-53E Super Stallion.

This was the first time a Marine Corps JLTV was moved from shore to ship by air, highlighting the capabilities of both platforms and allowing the 31st MEU a new opportunity to implement Expeditionary Advanced Base Operation (EABO) concepts. The planning and execution of this helicopter external lift operation integrated every part of the 31st MEU Marine Air Ground Task Force alongside U.S. Navy Amphibious Squadron-11 and USS *Miguel Keith* (ESB-5).

"CLB-31 is focused on challenging and realistic training that employs expeditionary advanced base resupply and pre-positioning of critical equipment in sup-

port of the Naval Expeditionary Force," said LtCol Matthew Verdin, commanding officer of CLB-31.

This helicopter external lift operation was initiated with the CH-53E lifting the JLTV from a beach within a secured training area in Okinawa, Japan and proceeded entirely over water to *Miguel Keith*. The CH-53E proceeded back to the pick-up location with the load after conducting multiple lifts aboard *Miguel Keith*, simulating the establishment of an expeditionary advanced base from naval amphibious shipping.

This training evolution was a crucial step in further integrating subordinate elements of the 31st MEU and providing a path for developing future EABO capabilities with similar platforms. The crew that executed this event had previously conducted several prior JLTV lifts to maximize their readiness, proficiency and safety.

"This was primarily an opportunity to build our team's ability to move combat vehicles and weapon systems to, from, and between expeditionary advance bases from ships," said Captain Tyler J.

Hopping, CH-53E pilot with VMM-262 (Rein). "The CH-53 and helicopter support team provide a unique capability to get those systems to otherwise inaccessible locations."

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

Capt Pawel Puczko, USMC

## CALIFORNIA

### 3rd MAW Sharpens Wing-Level Warfighting

Marines and Sailors with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) refined warfighting tactics and command and control capabilities for future conflicts during Exercise Summer Fury 22. With units positioned across California, 3rd MAW tested components of expeditionary advanced base operations with a "Hub, Spoke and Node" model in preparation for the next fight.

Acting as the "Hub," Marine Air Control Group-38 established a Tactical Air



**Infantry Marines with 2nd Bn, 1st Marines, disembark from an MV-22B Osprey with VMM-364, MAG-39, 3rd MAW, at MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, Calif., on Aug. 1. The Marines of 2/1 provided security in support of Exercise Summer Fury 22. (Photo by Cpl Rachaelanne Woodward, USMC)**

Command Center (TACC) aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, San Diego, Calif. With the TACC fully operational, MACG-38, in conjunction with 3rd MAW key leaders, facilitated command and control of aviation assets throughout the battlespace.

Marines at the TACC demonstrated versatility through simultaneous focus on real-world and simulated operations. While tracking personnel and aircraft in support of the exercise, 3rd MAW staff also conducted planning based on an Indo-Pacific maritime conflict scenario.

Marine Wing Support Squadrons (MWSS) were integral to this distributed fight. For the first time since their 2022 realignment to MACG-38, MWSS-373 executed site command of the TACC, fusing aviation ground support with aviation command and control to provide the 3rd MAW battle staff with a common operational picture and responsive, real-

time tracking of operations and logistics requirements.

“Summer Fury 22 provided the unique opportunity for MWSS-373 to integrate into the TACC, showcasing our ability to generate sorties for the wing commander,” said Second Lieutenant Diane Garcia, MWSS-373 Assistant Operations Officer. “Our integration with MACG-38 demonstrates the full potential of the aviation command and control ground support

system. The training we executed here honed our ability to enable the wing to fight and win as we continue to execute the intent of Force Design 2030.”

Concurrently, Marine Aircraft Group-39 advanced forward to Camp Roberts, Bradley, Calif., with 14 aircraft, including three AH-1Z Vipers, three UH-1Y Venoms, four MV-22B Ospreys and four CH-53E Super Stallions augmented from MAG-16. Additionally, a company of in-



**A UH-1Y Venom with HMLA-267, MAG-39, 3rd MAW, prepares to land during Exercise Summer Fury 22 at Fort Irwin, Calif., Aug. 3. By operating out of forward aviation nodes, HMLA-267 demonstrated expeditionary capabilities in an austere environment.**

fantry Marines from 2nd Bn, 1st Marines attached to MAG-39 to provide security for all operations.

At Camp Roberts, MAG-39 established a combat operations center that acted as the “Spoke.” Once the Spoke was established, MAG-39 leaders received information and tasking from the Hub in order to complete missions at various “Nodes” throughout the battlespace. Because of its strategic location, MAG-39 was able to receive tasking from MAW key leaders and quickly displace aircraft to various locations throughout the area of operations.

Aircraft were displaced to four different “Nodes” in California throughout the exercise. These nodes were at Paso Robles Municipal Airport, Naval Air Station Lemoore, NAS Point Mugu, and the Strategic Expeditionary Landing Field aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms. MAG-39 rotary wing flight operations spanned the skies over southern, central, and eastern California during the week-long exercise.

At the various nodes, MAG-39 conducted operations such as air-delivered ground refueling, forward arming and refueling, and close air support. The exercise culminated in an air assault with participation from MV-22B Ospreys, CH-53E Super Stallions, AH-1Z Vipers and UH-1Y Venoms in support of a company of infantry Marines from 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment.

“Third MAW’s warfighting skills were sharpened this week during the Summer Fury Exercise. Command and control, flight operations, and expeditionary air-field operations fused with virtual training, refined the MAW’s preparedness to provide lethal effects in all domains,” said Brigadier General Robert B. Brodie, 3rd MAW Assistant Wing Commander. “Ultimately, this exercise proved the wing’s readiness to support I Marine Expeditionary Force from competition to conflict. Any clime, any time!”

1stLt Nicholas Paglialonga, USMC

## MARINE CORPS BASE HAWAII

### 2022 Kaneohe Bay Air Show:

#### One Air Show, One Community

It has been seven years since the last Kaneohe Bay Air Show and Open House which also featured the U.S. Naval Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels, flying over the bay, but this year’s event was like no other.

“Blues on the Bay,” was free and open to all residents and visitors of Oahu, and the community attended in droves. The air show welcomed nearly 103,000 guests. It was an amazing opportunity to host the local community and performers,



CPL ARIANNA LINDHEIMER, USMC

**A MV-22 Osprey flies near a Blue Angels' F/A-18 Super Hornet as part of the 2022 Kaneohe Bay Air Show, MCAS Kaneohe Bay, MCB Hawaii, Aug. 13.**

while simultaneously demonstrating and showcasing Hawaii’s military to the public.

Prior to the air show weekend, the Blue Angels highlighted key figures who have substantially contributed to the local community, including the 2022 Hawaii State Teacher of the Year, Whitney Aragaki; the weatherman for Hawaii News Now, Guy Hagi, and Ultimate Fighting Championship Featherweight Champion, Max Holloway. The VIPs were given the opportunity to fly in the back seat of an F/A-18 Super Hornet.

“I was blessed with the opportunity to fly with the Blue Angels,” said a Twitter post published by Holloway. “Sadly my ‘never been KO’d [knocked out]’ streak came to an end,” he tweeted, followed by a video of him losing consciousness in the back seat of the F/A-18 Super Hornet. The opportunity to recognize these upstanding individuals strengthens the military’s bond

with Hawaii’s community and enables the military to show its appreciation for the dedication these influencers have.

In addition to demonstrating military assets to the community, MCBH was also proud to embrace and infuse Hawaiian culture into the air show’s opening ceremony. Each day, the air show commenced with a traditional Hawaiian blessing ceremony from Kahu Dean Harvest, a Hawaiian priest, to invite goodness, aloha, happiness, harmony, health, peace, protection and abundance into the day’s events.

The Flying Leathernecks Demonstration Skydiving Team was among other acts performing at the air show. The Flying Leathernecks jumped out of a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III from a height of 8,000 feet. Among the jumpers were T.K. Hinshaw and Jake Kilfoyle, both Oahu residents. One carried the American flag and the other carried the Hawaii state flag, honoring the island and community





**LCpl Xavier A. Figueroaacevedo, 3rd MLR, poses in front of the Blue Angels' F/A-18 Super Hornets during the 2022 Kaneohe Bay Air Show, MCAS Kaneohe Bay, MCB Hawaii, Aug. 13.**

CPL ARIANNA LINDHEIMER, USMC

**Right: Sgt James A. Little, 3rd MLR, greets visitors during the Joint Air-Ground Task Force Demonstration as part of the 2022 Kaneohe Bay Air Show, MCAS Kaneohe Bay, MCB Hawaii, Aug. 13.**

for being in attendance and assisting with the success of the air show.

"The best experience so far, out here on base, is actually being able to see people face to face," explained Charelle Silva, senior manager of programs for Girl Scouts of Hawaii. "We're able to show the community what we're all about."

"It's a lot of fun seeing the different activities and booths, seeing everyone do their tricks is really cool because I'm so used to seeing them [aircraft] just fly over my house," said Lawai Silva, Silva's daughter. "I haven't been to an air show before so it's really interesting seeing these things for the first time."

Col Speros Koumparakis, commanding officer for MCB Hawaii, was not only surprised at the number of attendees but stunned by the community's involvement.

"What an incredible experience to bring so many people from the community together at the end of the summer to MCBH," exclaimed Koumparakis. "I am so impressed with the base team, our tenants and our partners ... we had record numbers of people on the installation."

One particular performance showcased an incredible display of the joint and inter-



CPL ARIANNA LINDHEIMER, USMC

agency world in Hawaii. The Joint Task Force demonstration provided a firsthand experience of a simulated assault, combining various elements such as Marine Corps MV-22 Ospreys, an Air Force F-22 Raptor, an Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon, and infantry Marines from 3rd Marine Littoral Regiment.

"Hawaii is a special place; we're out here in the middle of the Pacific Ocean," stated Koumparakis. "The only way to

make it work is to work together ... our Joint Task Force showed the world that we know how to operate in a joint way."

After seven long years, servicemembers and neighbors from the local community were able to break attendance records, share friendship with one another, and put on an exceptional performance for spectators as they all enjoyed the 2022 Kaneohe Bay Air Show together.

Cpl Samantha Sanchez, USMC





LCPL JONATHAN BEAUCHAMP, USMC

**Cpl Dylan Diamond, a team leader with Special Reaction Team, H&S Bn, MCIPAC, fires an M40A6 rifle during multiple weapons sustainment training on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, Aug. 11.**

“The way we execute the mission at hand has drastically changed,” said Harned, “We still enter structures in a dynamic style, referring to kicking down doors, but we now take into account a psychological approach, to understand what the individual inside is thinking and what we can do to help them.”

SRT works on an emergency basis. When a threat is deemed too high risk for a patrolman, SRT receives a call to neutralize the subject.

“My job is to protect and save lives,” said Cpl Dylan Diamond, a team leader with SRT, H&S Battalion, MCIPAC. “Our job as a team is to protect all servicemembers, Status of Forces Agreement Personnel, and local nationals on base. When we arrive at a site, we resolve the situation promptly, with minimal property damage.”

Diamond explained that he sees SRT continuing to move positively by adapting to the new situations and developing new tactics to protect bases across Okinawa. Diamond explained that they will continue to grow and work as a team, furthering their goal to contain, control, and dominate a threat psychologically or physically.

LCpl Jonathan Beauchamp, USMC



### **CAMP HANSEN, OKINAWA, JAPAN** **Special Reaction Team** **Conducts Multiple Weapons** **Sustainment Training**

High-risk emergencies can happen any time on bases throughout the Corps and require the attention of a specific group of Marines from the Provost Marshal Office known as the Special Reaction Team (SRT). The members of SRT are attached to the Provost Marshal's Office and are always on standby to respond to situations such as an active shooter, hostage situations, and barricaded subjects.

“Today, we shot from a tower structure to simulate engaging a hostile target from a sniper position. Afterward, we moved

to a short range to practice static fire, multiple hostile engagements, and team movement drills,” said GySgt Russell Harned, team commander with SRT, Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations Pacific. “We conducted a familiarization course of fire with an M40A6 rifle, Colt M45A1 Close Quarter Battle Pistol, P320-M18 pistol, and M4A1 carbines.”

To remain proficient, SRT practices marksmanship weekly by conducting range firing and team tactics. As they continue training, the team members have adapted to work not only with a dynamic approach but also with a psychological one.



LCPL JONATHAN BEAUCHAMP, USMC

**Marines and Naval personnel with Special Reaction Team, H&S Bn, MCIPAC, pose for a photo during multiple weapons sustainment training on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, Aug. 11. The members of SRT are attached to the PMO and are specifically trained and equipped to react in scenarios like an active shooter, hostage situations, and barricaded subjects.**



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COURTESY OF MAJ TOM SCHUEMAN, USMC AND ZAINULLAH ZAKI

**Maj Tom Schueman holds a rocket-propelled grenade launcher found by his interpreter, Zainullah "Zak" Zaki, during the search of a compound in Sangin.**

# THE GOLF COURSE

By Maj Tom Schueman, USMC And Zainullah Zaki

*Editor's note: This excerpt from the book "Always Faithful" by Maj Tom Schueman and his translator, Zainullah "Zak" Zaki, is told from Schueman's perspective. It was reprinted with permission of William Morrow, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers.*

**W**e almost always started patrols out of Patrol Base (PB) Vegas by going through Kodezay since the Taliban were less likely to put an improvised explosive device (IED) there. They had long since learned they were better off not killing the village kids. I explained the facts of life in the moment to the lieutenant replacing me as we discussed the final familiarization patrol we would accompany them on. Most of 1st Platoon had already headed to Camp Leatherneck to begin the movement back to Camp Pendleton. But Sergeant Decker, Zainullah "Zak" Zaki; my machine-gun squad leader, Sergeant Nikirk; and I would

serve as tour guides for a patrol otherwise composed of newly arrived Marines. The lieutenant leading the platoon replacing us was a brave, intelligent and talented officer. But I could tell that not everything I said was getting through.

"Ninety-eight percent of the world's opium poppies grow in Afghanistan," I told him. "Helmand Province, specifically Sangin district, is the heart of the drug market that funds the Taliban."

He nodded. Training had already armed him with this fact. "Between September and December 2010, we were in a firefight on every patrol. *Every. One.* For 100 days." Again, he nodded, face impassive.

I knew what he was thinking and feeling. I had been there seven months before, armed with training-based understanding rather than understanding born of experience. Every infantry officer who truly has the calling wants direct combat. After all, our stated mission is to locate, close with, and destroy the enemy. But the truth

is that it's all academic until combat is a present reality. Then you start thinking hard about the implications of everything you thought you wanted. You start feeling things that just can't be fully understood until the possibility of violent death is truly manifest.

"Before January, we found hundreds of IEDs. But, man, look, back in January, the Taliban told the farmers they were behind on poppy production. The poppy farmers said they could not farm for fear of getting killed in the crossfire between us and the Taliban. So, the Taliban signed a fake-ass treaty, saying they were sick of fighting, and they just wanted to join the government. They said they would clean up the IEDs, turn in their weapons, and farm."

I had the lieutenant's attention. IEDs, and their effects, are the common thread of the global war on terror. A reduction in their use mean fewer potential casualties for his Marines. Zak interrupted us. Some children from Kodezay had arrived at PB



**My replacement lifted his eyebrows and exhaled through pursed lips.**

**IEDs are frankly terrifying. They are not what any of us signed up to fight. ... I could see his thoughts churning. Today was his patrol ... and he wanted to go through the golf course.**



COURTESY OF MAJ TOM SCHUEMAN, USMC AND ZAINULLAH ZAKI

**Schueman and the Marines of 1st Plt, "Kilo" Co, 3rd Bn, 5th Marines at Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan.**

Vegas to tell Zak that while we had been patrolling near the adjacent river the day before, the Taliban took advantage of our absence to spend a day digging in 15-20 IEDs all over the golf course. That was the perfect segue for me.

"So, the Taliban and the Afghan government signed the treaty. All of us here on the ground knew it was bullshit. The terms meant we stayed on our base for several days to allow these assholes to supposedly clear the IEDs that they had laid before without us shooting them. What they actually did was turn in three rusty antique rifles, like this treaty required, then used the time to reseed the area with two to three times what they laid previously. Then they told the farmers to get back out there and farm poppy to make them money to fight us with. So, when we went back out in January, there were no more firefights but way more IEDs. Which brings us to today."

My replacement lifted his eyebrows and exhaled through pursed lips. IEDs are frankly terrifying. They are not what



**Afghan interpreter Zainullah "Zak" Zaki in Sangin Province, Afghanistan, 2011.**

any of us signed up to fight. As long as a Marine has someone to shoot at, he is generally OK. Marines want to fight an enemy that wants to fight them. An IED kills without recourse beyond a medical evacuation and a hope that your legs are only gone below the knee. I could see his thoughts churning. Today was his patrol. In Marine lingo, he was in the left seat, the driver's seat. I was in the right seat, as a passenger and tour guide to a pastoral paradise where poppies and IEDs were both planted in abundance. And he wanted to go through the golf course.

I shook my head and said, "We shouldn't go through that field, man." He looked at me and I saw the certainty the Corps trains in its leaders. "I don't want to set a pattern of always going through the village," he said.

"Dude, we always go through the village because the assholes don't put IEDs in the village."

"Not today. We're going through the golf course."

There was not much to do but say "OK"





COURTESY OF MAJ TOM SCHUEMAN, USMC AND ZAINULLAH ZAKI

**Schueman and his Marines visited with residents of Sangin during a patrol. From the left: Cpl Justin McLoud, Schueman, “Doc” Rashad Collins and LCpl Eric Rose.**

and get my guys ready for the patrol.

A Marine leader is expected to be where he or she can best control the unit and affect events at the point of friction. When accompanying one of my squads, I usually patrolled in the first third of the patrol, usually as the third or fourth man. The patrol was a bit larger than normal since we were augmenting the newly arrived platoon. Thus, there were five Marines across the golf course when Sergeant Nikirk stepped onto the field and disappeared in a cloud of smoke and mud, accompanied by a loud “POP!”

When you see one of your Marines injured or killed by an IED, it is an impotent feeling. Your enemy typically disappears long before they inflict actual damage upon you and your Marines. Unless they reveal themselves by firing at you, there is nothing to fight, but time as you try to stabilize a critically injured young man, convincing him to hold on

through evacuation to the next level of care, and hope that you did not miss anything vital as you evaluated his injuries. I ran to Nikirk with Zak on my heels as always. There would be no need for him to interpret. He had simply become one of us over the months we spent together, and he was preparing to help me attempt to hold someone together as a Navy corpsman rendered lifesaving first aid.

But as the smoke cleared and the mud and dust settled from the air, I arrived at Nikirk’s side to see he was standing next to a partially ruptured, 40-pound jug of homemade explosive, much of it now dusted across his face. He was alive, perceptibly shaking from the experience of a low-order, partial detonation of ammonium nitrate homemade explosive (HME) intended to sympathetically detonate a 105 mm howitzer shell right under his feet. The combination should have left Nikirk a pink vapor drifting in the air

with the lingering smell of ammonia. But because the area had recently experienced a lot of rain and Taliban quality control was low, the IED pushed him aside, plastered his face in the ammonium nitrate and aluminum used to make the explosive, and exposed the artillery shell that would have left him nothing but a memory. Since we had barely left friendly lines, and it had become clear that Nikirk was largely unharmed, I called for explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) to come out and destroy the IED. After an hour, they arrived and confirmed that the IED should have meant the end of more than one of us. They also noted that the IED was triggered by a tripwire, the first we had seen of such. Typically, IEDs in Sangin were triggered by the victim’s weight pushing down a pressure plate, which completed an ignition circuit.

Sgt Nikirk and Sgt Decker came to me and asked to return to base with EOD. I



The combination should have left Nikirk a pink vapor drifting in the air with the lingering smell of ammonia. But because the area had recently experienced a lot of rain and Taliban quality control was low, the IED pushed him aside, plastered his face in the ammonium nitrate and aluminum used to make the explosive, and exposed the artillery shell.

Right: Schueman and Cpl Aguilar discuss security issues with Sangin residents.

Bottom right: Zaki, the interpreter, providing security in Sangin.

Below: Zaki in Kabul, July 2021.



COURTESY OF MAJ TOM SCHUEMAN, USMC AND ZAINULLAH ZAKI



COURTESY OF MAJ TOM SCHUEMAN, USMC AND ZAINULLAH ZAKI

sent Nikirk back but told Decker he would have to remain. We needed his experience if things continued to go downhill. Sgt Decker looked at me, reminded me he had a son whom he had never met, and said, “This is bullshit, sir. These guys are going to get us killed.” Decker had never needed more than a direction and distance to and description of the thing I wanted attacked and destroyed. He was both courageous and cautious, a force of nature in combat. Now, for the first time in his life, Sgt Decker was ready to pack it in on a combat operation. I told Decker we were continuing on, then turned my attention to my incoming lieutenant counterpart and asked him his plan.

“We’re going to continue to push across the field.” Aggression aside, I was stunned.

“The only way we are going across that field,” I said, “is if you have the combat engineer back-clear from his position to



COURTESY OF MAJ TOM SCHUEMAN, USMC AND ZAINULLAH ZAKI

us, then reclear it, since he had obviously missed at least one of the IEDs.”

Combat engineers accompanied us on most patrols and carried a metal-detecting sweeper intended to find IEDs and land mines. The incoming platoon commander gave the order.

We had been stationary for more than an hour as we dealt with Nikirk’s IED

detonation, then EOD’s arrival and departure with Nikirk. That was way too long and now the Taliban certainly knew exactly where we were as the combat engineer began the exhaustive process of sweeping back across the flat, open expanse of the golf course from 500 meters away. He was halfway across the field, coming back to us, his sweeper ticking



**I was furious. This was our last patrol and after seven months, stupidity was going to kill us.**  
**I looked at Zak. All I could say was, "Son of a bitch! Can you believe this shit!?"**  
**He just shook his head in disbelief and said, "Lieutenant Tom, this is crazy."**

**Right: Zaki and his family outside of Hamid Karzai International Airport, August 2021, as they made one of several attempts to get inside the gate in order to secure seats on a flight to the U.S.**

**Below: Schueman and Zaki were reunited in Minneapolis, Minn., in February 2022.**



COURTESY OF MAJ TOM SCHUEMAN, USMC AND ZAINULLAH ZAKI



COURTESY OF MAJ TOM SCHUEMAN, USMC AND ZAINULLAH ZAKI

back and forth like a metronome, when the second IED blew. This time it was a complete detonation.

The combat engineer disappeared in the fire and mud and smoke. Before the debris had stopped falling, the Taliban unloaded on us with rifles, rocket-propelled grenades, and medium machine-gun fire. They knew someone had to go get the combat engineer. They knew there were more IEDs in the field. They wanted us moving around to hit them.

With the incoming fire everyone hit the

deck. You could tell the difference between new guys and 3/5 Marines. The new guys were face-down in the dirt or neck-deep in an irrigation canal, rifles firing in no particular direction. Those of us on our last patrol were up on an arm, scanning for muzzle flashes and smoke. Painful experience told us we had to determine the source of the fire and put our own on them before they could hit one of us.

I was furious. This was our last patrol and after seven months, stupidity was going to kill us. I looked at Zak. All I could say was, "Son of a bitch! Can you believe this shit!?" He just shook his head in disbelief and said, "Lieutenant Tom, this is crazy." Of course, Zak wasn't leaving with us. He would stay here.

As I continued to scan for the enemy, out of the corner of my eye I saw Sgt Decker run onto the field toward the wounded combat engineer. The man who had asked me to let him return to PB Vegas, the one who reminded me he had never met the child he'd named Maximum Danger Decker, was running into the midst of an uncleared field planted with double digits' worth of IEDs to retrieve a wounded Marine he didn't know. I thought about the fact that it was our last patrol, that I had,

only moments before, denied Decker a chance to return to safety, and that I now assumed I would soon be living with the fact that I denied a dead man a chance to meet his child.

I screamed, "DECKER!!!" He kept moving into the field. I screamed again, "SGT DECKER! STOP!" He looked back. I had no children.

"Come back here! You're not going, I am!" I yelled.

Decker started moving back to me. I looked at Zak and asked, "Are you ready to go?"

Of course, he was. Zak's eyes were open a bit wider than normal, but he was always ready to go. Even when, as was the case now, there was no reason for an interpreter. I just needed an extra set of hands to save an American life. I looked at the canal we had to cross. It was frothing from the bullets striking the water's surface, as if a tropical rainstorm had set down in Sangin, but only on the golf course. I looked at the rest of the patrol, spread out in single file and hugging the earth, looking at nothing, just spraying bullets everywhere in a death blossom.

Zak and I were the only people up. We made convenient targets for the



Taliban machine gunners as we ran up the column, me screaming, “WHERE IS THE CORPSMAN!?!?” The guy tasked with providing lifesaving care should have been up and moving already.

I saw a hand go up, inches above the dirt, his face pressed into the mud. I grabbed the drag strap on the back of his body armor, yelling, “Follow me!”

Time slowed down. I was moving forward, dragging the corpsman into the field toward the combat engineer, the extent of whose wounds I still did not know. Zak pushed him from behind as we all winced against the incoming hail of steel. I was thinking about what we needed to do. Simultaneously I thought, “My last f---ing day! My last f---ing day! Best-case scenario, I am not leaving Sangin with my legs. Worst-case scenario, I’m gonna be turned into pink mist by a 105 shell.”

There are often absurdity and seriousness in equal amount during combat. As we ran into the field, knowing that the first IED had been initiated by a tripwire, something we had never seen in Sangin, I was running like a football player doing high knee drills, trying to avoid additional tripwires. Every time my right foot struck the ground, I yelled, “Motherf---er!” like some absurdist running cadence.

For 250 meters it was, left foot,

“Motherf---er!” left foot, “Motherf---er!” left foot, “Motherf---er!”

We reached the casualty, and I threw the corpsman at him so he could begin to do his job. Rain and the weight of the mud had again been our friend. The blast had thrown the combat engineer through the air, but the weight of the mud had tamped down the explosion. His major injury was an arm bone sticking out through his flesh, a relatively benign result.

I had been carrying an M32 grenade launcher for two months simply because I wanted to use it in a firefight. Imagine the world’s most powerful revolver as a six-shot, rotary-magazine, 40 mm weapon. Now I had my chance. It seemed like the thing to do since I still expected to die recrossing the field. As the corpsman worked on the wounded Marine, I started slinging grenades.

With 40 mm explosions not to their liking, Taliban fire slackened to an acceptable level. The corpsman pronounced the combat engineer ready to move and we headed back across the field without hitting any more of the IEDs we knew were there.

I got back to the incoming lieutenant and hissed, “This patrol is over!”

“I guess I should have maybe listened to you on the route.” No shit.

I was a good kid. Never drunk in high school, never in trouble. I’d never had a cigarette in my life. My grandmother died of emphysema. We got back to PB Vegas, and my first words were “Who has a cigarette?”

I stood and smoked my first cigarette, a Camel Blue, with Zak and it was so, so good. I never coughed once.

*Authors’ bios: Maj Tom Schueman served in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, as a platoon commander with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines. He later redeployed to Afghanistan as a JTAC and advisor to the Afghan National Army while he was a member of the 1st Recon Bn. He later earned a master’s degree in literature. He is a graduate of Naval War College and is currently the ops officer with 3/5. He is the founder of the non-profit Patrol Base Abbate.*

*Zainullah “Zak” Zaki was raised by subsistence farmers in Afghanistan. He served as an interpreter for U.S. forces with the 3rd Bn, 5th Marines in Helmand Province beginning in 2010 and later worked for the U.S. government in Kunar Province. After more than six years battling bureaucracy, with Maj Schueman as his advocate, Zak successfully immigrated to America with his family in 2021.*

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# Leatherneck Laffs



"Short time calendar?"

"Days to go until the Marine Corps Birthday."



"I'll send the email to the general with a saluting emoji."

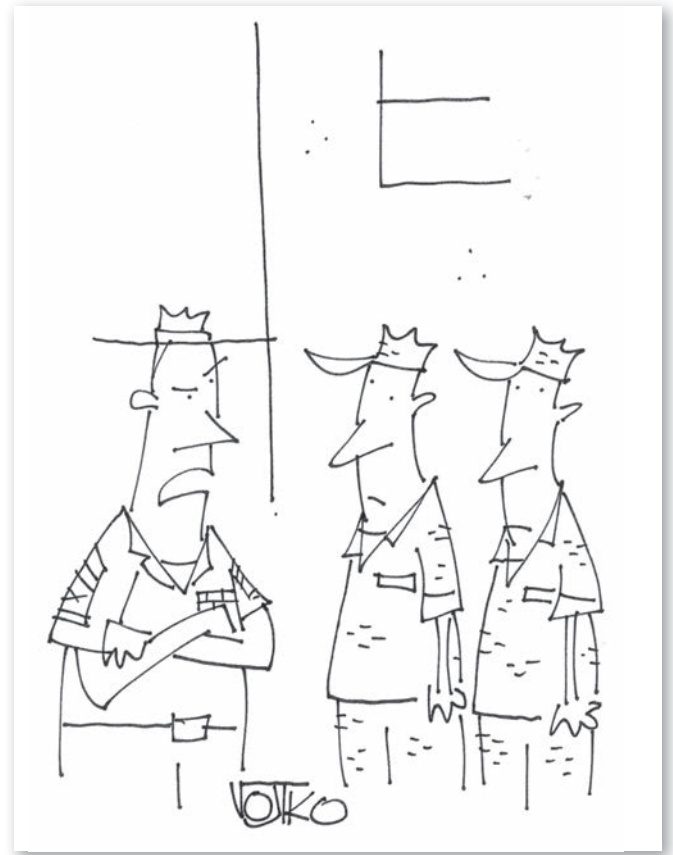


"Sir, don't forget me!"



I hate when that happens.





"Thanks for the exercise suggestions, Private, but we're not doing pilates."



"Sir, we've been sabotaged for cyber attack. Someone took my escape button."



# Sky on Fire: Earning the Title During America's Deadliest Mass Shooting



The Las Vegas sign on the Strip on Oct. 9, 2017, covered in flowers in the wake of the Las Vegas Strip shooting.

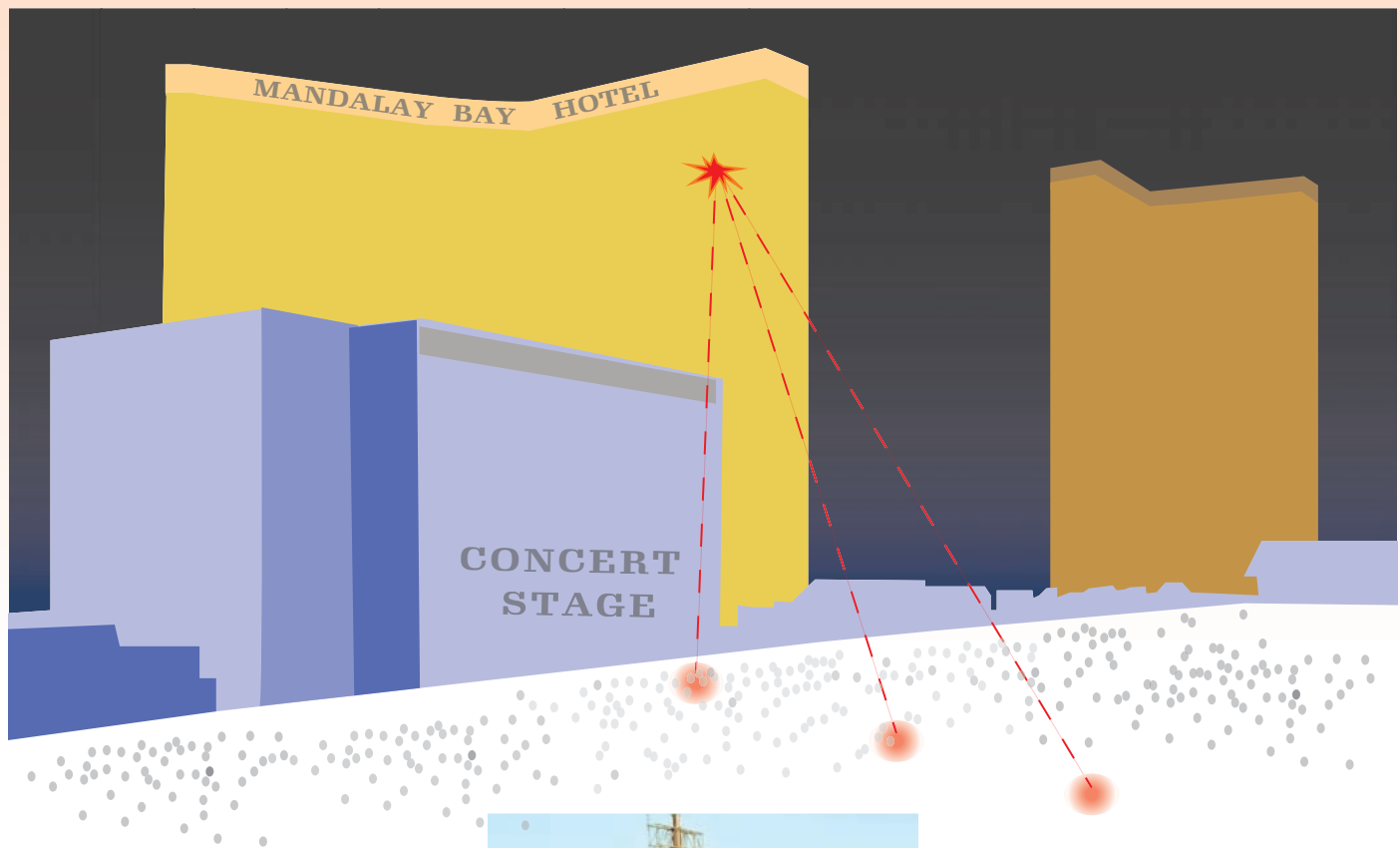
By GySgt Chase McGrortyHunter, USMC

**I** came to understand the true respect that the American public has for its Marines in the rawest and most honest form on a warm fall night in 2017. Nearly 400 miles from my duty station of Camp Pendleton, while completely detached from my routine duties as a Marine, my resolve and ability to live up to the title that I had held for six years would be tested in a way I could never have imagined.

From their earliest days in the Corps, Marines are instilled with the understanding that they are the guardians of the title Marine and the global admiration that comes with it. This esteem is one that was earned by men and women who charged the wheat fields of Belleau Wood, trudged



This depiction of the Mandalay Bay Hotel illustrates where a shooter positioned himself as he opened fire on concertgoers in Las Vegas, Nev., on Oct. 1, 2017.



JASON MONROE

through the black sands of Iwo Jima, and bled in the dirt streets of Afghanistan. Although we understand that our predecessors earned the respect, we must also recognize that when we earn the title, we are immediately viewed by the American public as synonymous with the generations of heroes on whose shoulders we stand.

In October 2017 as I stood with my girlfriend, who would later become my wife, we were joined by nearly 22,000 other concertgoers enjoying the final moments of a three-day country music festival on the south end of the Las Vegas strip. Up to that moment, the trip had been consumed by meeting new friends and dancing to the music of our talented country artists.

Excited to see one of our favorite artists and headliner of the night, Jason Aldean, we weaved through the crowd until we were only about 25 yards from the right-hand side of the stage closest to Las Vegas Boulevard. The lights flashed on, and the crowd erupted as the set began. The Las Vegas sky was as electric as ever, surrounded by the towering glitzy hotels and casinos that seemed to cradle the venue in their palm. The crowd sang along as we all danced and swayed together, enjoying this moment. Jason Aldean took center stage for his second



COURTESY OF GYSGT CHASE MCGRORTYHUNTER, USMC

**Chase McGrortyHunter and his wife, Dena, pictured at the Route 91 Country Music Festival in Las Vegas, Nev., before the shooting occurred.**

to last song of the night, “When She Says Baby.” It seemed as though we all knew the song as soon as the guitarist strummed the opening chords. It was 10:03 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 1, 2017, and life was great for us in that small corner of America. Aldean started singing the song’s first lines as we all joined in:

“Some days it’s tough just getting up, throwing on these boots and making that climb.”

**“Were those gunshots?”  
“Is that firecrackers?”  
“Was it the speakers crackling?”**

Then, an unwelcome cascade of sporadic snaps whipped through the song, challenging the naturally noisy Las Vegas atmosphere and competing for everyone’s attention against our headlining performance. Even Aldean paused for a second, wondering what those sounds could be. Instantaneously, the murmurings happened all throughout the crowd.

“Were those gunshots?”

“Is that firecrackers?”

“Was it the speakers crackling?”

It’s been said that there are moments in your life that take ownership of the space in your mind; seconds or minutes feel like hours or days, and they will cement themselves in your memory at a cost incomparable to other events in your life. They will remain long after others have faded. The moments that ensued would prove that statement true as they would weave themselves into the fabric of my own memory.

When the first volley of gunfire erupted, I too wanted to believe that it was fire-

works. After all, your mind won't allow you to fathom that the unthinkable is happening and you are at the center of it. The tension had already set in on the crowd in those short couple of seconds, but the overwhelming feeling that it wasn't gunshots was confirmed when the concert continued uninterrupted.

Before Jason Aldean could finish the next line, another barrage of gunfire ripped through the air announcing its violent reality to the crowd. This one sounded different, opposing, like an arrhythmic metronome that may have gone unnoticed by those unfamiliar with the sounds of weapons firing. It sent a chill down my spine. It was long. It was automatic. There was no doubt about what was happening now. At the same time, we saw the concert security and Las Vegas police officers make a dash into the crowd only a dozen feet in front of us as a lady cried, "My friend was just shot in the arm!" Any immediate escape was impossible in a crowd so thick. I oriented myself toward the exit as the next succession of weapons fire cut into the crowd. Like a domino taking the next

**"Are you alone?  
Come with us!  
My boyfriend is a  
Marine; he will get  
us out of here!"  
The woman's panic  
ceased for a moment  
as she shouted  
into her phone,  
"Honey, there's a  
Marine! I'm going  
with them, I love you."**

in succession down as it falls, we fell to the ground under the crushing weight of the other concertgoers.

I found myself laid out at an angle across my girlfriend's midsection and tried to free enough of my body to cover the rest of hers. While lying there among

the screams and cries of thousands of terrorized people still without a way out or any idea of where the attackers were, I can distinctly recall an internal conversation with myself during the gunfire. "Is this really how I die? A terrorist attack at a concert. This is going to hurt. I hope the bullets don't go all the way through me." We remained trapped for nearly 90 seconds from the first shots before enough of the crowd let up that we felt we could make our escape across the open venue. During that time, more than 500 rounds were fired into the crowd surrounding us.

By luck, I was familiar with the back streets surrounding the venue and was able to lead my girlfriend away from the Strip upon our exit. The sprint we had just undertaken to escape caught up with my now gasping girlfriend as she pleaded with me to slow down. As I worked to coordinate an escape, I heard her yelling to a woman who was nearly immobile with terror and crying on the phone. "Are you alone? Come with us! My boyfriend is a Marine; he will get us out of here!" The woman's panic ceased for a moment as she shouted into her phone, "Honey,



**The parking lot that backs up to the Las Vegas airport where McGrortyHunter led several frightened concertgoers so that they could take shelter. They used a pile of scrap wood and sheet metal as cover as seen in the photo to the right. (Courtesy of GySgt Chase McGrortyHunter, USMC)**

COURTESY OF GYSGT CHASE MCGORTYHUNTER, USMC



there's a Marine! I'm going with them, I love you." She hung up abruptly and locked arms with us to create a human chain as we continued to try and escape the terror that surrounded us while what seemed to be unyielding automatic gunfire cut through the night sky. I squeezed the woman and my girlfriend behind a pile of scrap wood and sheet metal as I watched the single-entry point.

People seeking refuge began to pour into the parking lot where we had established our position, some behind bushes, others under cars. As I worked to ensure they stayed quiet so as not to give away our position, two girls in hysterics came stumbling up. As we pulled them into our makeshift hideout, my girlfriend again settled them with the sentiment, "It's going to be OK, my boyfriend is a Marine. He will get us out of here." In a moment of sheer terror, the title of Marine was seemingly the key phrase that came to mind for my girlfriend as a way to immediately gain the trust of the distraught women.

Knowing our best chance of survival was to get more distance from the Strip,



SGT TAYLER SCHWAMB, USMC

**Above: GySgt McGrortyHunter, 1st Transportation Bn, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, salutes MajGen Robert F. Castellvi, Commanding General, 1stMarDiv, after being awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal.**



SGT TAYLER SCHWAMB, USMC

**MajGen Castellvi, Commanding General, 1stMarDiv, gives a speech during SSgt McGrortyHunter's award ceremony May 31, 2019, at MCB Camp Pendleton.**



we worked to calm the women and prepare them to move. Afraid to leave the perceived safety of our hideout, one of the girls cried out to me, “Are you really a Marine? Are you really?” The questions were searching for hope and strength in what we were about to do. I grabbed my phone and showed her the lock screen photo of me in my dress blues with my girlfriend.

This simple act brought a moment of peace to the young woman as she exclaimed to her friend, “Oh my god, he really is a Marine, it’s going to be OK.” I grabbed one of the girls who was crying that her leg was broken. I slung her arm around my neck as my girlfriend supported her other side. We made our final escape to safety, which would end our night of terror.

A few years later, I was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal for heroism and was later asked by my Marines to be the guest speaker at the 1st Marine Regiment Lance Corporals Seminar graduation ceremony. When considering what I wanted to impart from the experience, I thought back to the phrase that seemed to be the key to

gaining the compliance of the terrified civilians we helped that night, “He’s a Marine.” In my mind, there could be no better moment to truly capture the weight the title of Marine carries with the American public. In a moment where each person was confronting unrelenting odds and the possibility of death, knowing

**I thought back to the phrase that seemed to be the key to gaining the compliance of the terrified civilians we helped that night, “He’s a Marine.”**

they had found a Marine meant that they had a shot of making it out alive.

In reality, my job as a cyber network chief means I am less likely to be a part of the front-line efforts and direct combat commonly associated with our spectacular grunts. On that night, my job, years of service, or the fact that I’d never

deployed were irrelevant. These semantics never crossed the minds of the people we helped that night because the title Marine was synonymous with a warrior class dedicated to ruthlessly helping those in danger and accomplishing missions in the face of potential harm.

We, as Marines, do not have the luxury of picking and choosing when we live up to the title of Marine. From the first day that we have an eagle, globe, and anchor handed to us until our dying breath, we will be seen as something almost fabled to the general public. I hope no Marine, or person, should ever be tested like I was on that night five years ago, but it is my firm belief that many men and women who wear the eagle, globe and anchor will be ready to answer if a similar call arises.

*Authors bio: GySgt McGrortyHunter is a cyber network chief by trade and is currently serving as a faculty advisor at the Staff Noncommissioned Officers Academy, Marine Corps Base Quantico. His previous assignments were with 1st Bn, 4th Marines where he deployed twice in support of the 31st and 15th MEUs. 🇺🇸*



SSgt Chase McGrortyHunter’s family and friends and Marines with 1st Transportation Bn, Combat Logistics Regiment 1, pose for a picture May 31, 2017, at MCB Camp Pendleton after an award ceremony for McGrortyHunter’s heroic actions during the Route 91 Las Vegas Country Music Festival shooting.





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## SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

### Sergeant Major, A Man of Few Words

In April 1957, in response to political upheaval in the Middle East, the Sixth Fleet, including the carriers USS *Forrestal*, (CVA-59) and USS *Lake Champlain* (CVA-39), plus the battleship USS *Iowa*, (BB-61), converged off the coast of Lebanon as a show of force in support against political turmoil. At that time, I was serving in the MarDet aboard *Lake Champlain*.

As we steamed from the west coast of Italy toward Lebanon, we prepared the ship's landing party for possible action. I was a gung-ho corporal and had taken seriously my training at Parris Island and Camp Geiger and had been absorbing everything that would prepare me for the day I might be tested under fire.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower would send Marines ashore in Lebanon a year later, but the ship's landing parties weren't committed during my deployment. Our task force remained offshore until diplomatic efforts and financial aid eased the tensions; then we sailed away.

Even so, I couldn't stop running possible combat scenarios through my mind. In fact, I wrote them down. Several months later I had a bright idea—I would write to the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, sending him my concerns and asking his advice.

One day at mail call I received a letter from Headquarters, Marine Corps. I was pumped. Here were the answers to all my concerns, answers

that would make me a better NCO. I tore open the envelope and read the letter:

*"Dear Corporal  
Rousseau,*

*In response to the  
questions in your letter, your  
actions will always depend  
upon the situation and the  
terrain.*

*Sincerely yours,  
Wilbur Bestwick  
Sergeant Major, United  
States Marine Corps"*

Huh? I stared  
dumbfounded at the letter.

With more experience, I came to realize that SgtMaj Bestwick had taught me one of life's great lessons. While I never served in combat, countless times I applied his advice to whatever problem I faced, always basing my response "on the situation and the terrain."

Daniel F. Rousseau  
Jupiter, Fla.

### Timing is Everything

While at Camp Lejeune N.C., in the late 1970s, I was a warrant officer in charge of a bulk fuel platoon. Our headquarters and company office were located in the French Creek area but our working and storage area was in the industrial area about 3 miles away.

One day I was at the company office sorting paperwork. I was sitting at the desk just in front of the commanding officer and first sergeant. We were all able to hear each other's conversations. The first sergeant called my platoon at the industrial area and after asking for Sergeant O'Brian said, "Sgt O'Brian, I need you to come here to sign some papers of great importance." Sgt O'Brian replied, "I'll be there, First Sergeant. How soon do you want me there?" The first sergeant replied, "As fast as you can get here."

As the first sergeant hung up the phone, he looked up and saw Sgt O'Brian coming down the hallway. Little he knew—our Sgt O'Brian had an identical twin brother who was reporting in from Okinawa that day.

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

### What I Thought Was a Good Deal Wasn't

In boot camp in 1958 we were required to hit our rifle with authority and make it pop. The only time the drill instructors didn't want to hear a loud noise was when the butt of the rifle touched the deck, which was to be a soft click.

One recruit in our platoon, Pvt Caldwell, was so tall they didn't have uniforms to

noise. The inspecting officer, a captain, smacked the rifle out of my hands, stared me in the eye, turned the rifle muzzle down, snapped open the butt plate, and shook it up and down. Nothing came out of the butt. Caldwell had no cleaning gear in his rifle! My life flashed before my eyes. I thought I was going to pass out.

Wordlessly the captain closed the butt plate and returned my M1. I never heard a word about it and luckily I did not get my boot camp experience enhanced with two more weeks in sunny San Diego.

Glenn Bass  
Sonora, Calif.

### The Man Behind the Wire

In the winter of 1969 in Vietnam I was with "Lima" Co, 4th Battalion, 11th Marines. The battery had M-109 155 mm (SP) howitzers, which look like big tanks but were self-propelled artillery pieces. We were located at the bottom west slope of Hill 55 about 15 miles southwest of Da Nang.

Our battery had two guard posts with three Marines at each. After a long quiet night, five of us were coming off watch at dawn. We were unable to wake the sixth man who was sleeping on a stretcher, covered by a poncho liner.

I suddenly had a bright idea that I got the others to go along with. We picked up his stretcher and one guy crossed the first strand of barbed wire. We handed one end to him, then another guy crossed over and took the other end. Again, another guy crossed the barbed wire as we continued passing the stretcher out of the wire. Finally, after crossing about six sets of barbed wire, we had him outside the base.

**"The inspecting  
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of my hands, stared  
me in the eye, turned  
the rifle muzzle  
down, snapped open  
the butt plate, and  
shook it up and down.  
Nothing came out."**

fit him so he would not be standing the final inspection. His rifle stock was a thing of beauty while mine was ugly at best. Pvt Caldwell offered to swap stocks with me for the inspection while I got squared away. "Deal," I said.

At the time of the inspection, I presented my best inspection arms, and it was like my rifle had been wrapped in towels and I was wearing thick mittens—no



We set him down, took off the poncho liner, and left him there.

Back on base one guy grabbed his clothes, boots, rifle, and gear and took them up to the corpsmen's hut and left them outside. The five of us then proceeded to go to chow and forgot about him.

At 8 a.m., during morning formation, his section head noticed him missing and had no choice but to report him. At this point with the entire battery lined up facing downhill and Capt Blasi, the battery commanding officer, standing in front of us, we suddenly remembered him. I said in a loud voice, "Sir! I know where he is." "Where?" said the captain. "There, Sir. Outside the wire," I said while pointing down the hill.

No one there will ever forget what happened next. I yelled, "Hey Smitty!" at the top of my lungs. Up sat Smitty, stretched and yawned while everyone watched. He didn't know where he was and then realized he was stark naked. I called to the guy who had taken his clothes and gear to

take them down to him.

At this point the battery was out of control. As the two guys walked back up the hill, the captain shouted at us, "Attention!" Capt Blasi then announced to his section head that Smitty had EPD (Extra Punishment Duty) for three nights filling sandbags for missing formation. Smitty was furious at me. I spoke up and told the captain that it was my fault and that I should take the punishment. The captain was only too glad to agree.

I was sorry that it had turned out so badly for the poor guy as most jokes of mine aren't as cruel as this one turned out to be.

LCpl Joseph P. "Snuffy"  
Jackson  
Loudonville, N.Y.

### **The Garbage Became Quite Useful**

After boot camp at Parris Island, my brother Walt was assigned sea duty and eventually wound up on a carrier in the Atlantic around 1964 or 1965. He told me they were regularly buzzed by Russian bombers

like the one pictured below. The Russians also attracted one of our fighters as an escort like this F-8 Crusader also shown.

On one occasion, the carrier was being trailed by a Russian "trawler" bristling

---

**The ship's captain ordered a clean sweep down fore and aft, and as usual, the GI cans would be carried back to the fantail. ... As the trawler was closing fast, the captain gave the order, "Empty all trash off the fantail!"**

---

with antennas. The ship's captain ordered a clean sweep down fore and aft, and as usual, the GI cans would be carried back to the fantail. He then ordered the

ship to turn into the wind.

As the trawler was closing fast, the captain gave the order, "Empty all trash off the fantail!" The "Ruskies" got covered with good old American garbage and broke off the chase. Not a shot was fired.

After that they kept their distance.

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

### **Admin Office Couldn't Make Up Their Mind**

I was stationed with Ammo Co, Supply Bn, 2nd FSSG at Camp Lejeune from June 1977 to September 1978. One day I was called into the admin office and told to report to the rifle range the following Monday for qualification. I said that I had just qualified a few months ago. I was told, "Just go." After two days at the range, I was called back into the admin office and yelled at for going to the range when I did not need to.

I had already been issued a shooting jacket. Shooting jackets were issued for rifle qualification week and meant to be turned in at the end of the week. No one ever asked for it back. Accordingly, I took it home on my next 96-hour pass.

I recently donated that shooting jacket, with the story, to the Cold War Museum in Warrenton, Va.

Sgt Thomas Ring  
USMC, 1975-1980  
Virac, Philippines

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: Sea Stories, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to [leatherneck@mca-marines.org](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org). We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA membership for the "Sea Story of the Month." 🦖



COURTESY OF CPL NORM SPILLETH

**During the Cold War years, the Russians would routinely fly their bombers low over Navy carriers and follow along with spy ships disguised as fishing trawlers.**



# General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps

## *Focusing on the Future of the Marine Corps*



USMC

By Col Mary H. Reinwald, USMC (Ret)

**T**he last few years have seen some significant changes in the Marine Corps, which has resulted in a Corps that is a bit different from the one that fought in Afghanistan and Iraq and significantly different from that which fought in Vietnam. A renewed emphasis on the Pacific, the growing cyber domain, and, of course, the somewhat controversial Force Design 2030 have been critical influences on the Marine Corps' new direction, established by General David H. Berger, the 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC).

**"We cannot go slow, and we can't get it wrong. We have to go through a lot of change in the next ... three to four years. It's not going to be easy. It's going to require us, I think, to modify a lot of our existing ideas of how we fight, how we organize."**

### **The Corps of the Future**

Gen Berger wasted no time in addressing the Corps of the future when he became Commandant in July 2019. "When I was privileged to take over as CMC, the next day, I published my planning guidance," Gen Berger said in a recent interview with *Leatherneck*. Noting that his predecessor, Gen Robert B. Neller, had told Congress that the Corps wasn't built for the future, Berger said simply, "I agree."

When discussing the Corps of the future, he is clear in his messaging. "We have to be ready to adapt. As we move forward, we have to learn. We have to move faster than the adversary." And the adversary often is China. "China is the pacing challenge ... The rate at which China is modernizing, the strength of their economy ... the advantages we enjoyed are eroding," he said. "It's on China because we have to stay in front of them capability wise ... If we're going to deter them, that's the bar."

In March 2020, Gen Berger's vision was solidified with the publication of Force Design 2030, the plan to set the course for the future Marine Corps. "We cannot go slow, and we can't get it wrong," he said at a Marine Corps Association (MCA) dinner a few months later. "We have to go through a lot of change in the next ... three to four years. It's not going to be easy. It's going to require us, I think, to modify a lot of our existing ideas of how we fight, how we organize."

The general was more specific in the actual Force Design 2030 document: "The 2018 National Defense Strategy redirected the Marine Corps' mission focus from countering violent extremists in the Middle East to great power/peer-level competition, with special emphasis on the Indo-Pacific. Such a profound shift in missions, from inland to littoral, and from non-state actor to peer competitor, necessarily requires substantial adjustments in how we organize, train, and equip our Corps. A return to our historic role in the maritime littoral will also demand greater integration with the Navy and a reaffirmation of that strategic partnership. As a consequence, we must transform our traditional models for organizing, training, and equipping the force to meet new desired ends, and do so in full partnership with the Navy."

In a July 2022 interview with the *Washington Post*, Gen Berger provided more specifics saying, "We need a better mix of loitering munitions, rocket artillery, missiles and other systems, manned and unmanned."

Two updates in April 2021 and May 2022 have further refined the direction of Force Design as it seems to be making the Corps lighter and more agile. Major General Ben Watson, the previous





ANDREW NOH

commander of the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, described the goal of Force Design as developing “a balanced portfolio of capabilities so that when we are trying to close kill chains against a modern, multi-domain adversary, we’ve got a complete tool kit.”

The Commandant has won over some crucial constituencies with his plan. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and his predecessor, Mark T. Esper, have been “fully supportive,” according to the Commandant, “and, in fact, urge us to go faster.” Congress is also supportive. In a letter dated May 27, members of the Senate and House Committees on Defense expressed their support for Force Design 2030 stating in part, “Congress should fully support this effort and commend the Marine Corps for making difficult investment and divestment decisions of what to do and, more importantly, what not to do, in order to ensure U.S. advantage in strategic competition.”

### Discussion and Debate

Much has been made in various media outlets of retired general officers disagreeing with Force Design in outside forums. In an op-ed in the *Washington Post* on April 22, three retired four-star generals, Gen Charles “Chuck” Krulak,



LCPL JENNIFER SANCHEZ, USMC

**The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen David H. Berger, and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, SgtMaj Troy Black, present Superior Achiever Awards to outstanding recruiters in San Antonio, Texas, Oct. 20, 2021.**

**Gen Berger was the guest speaker at the MCA's West Coast Dinner in 2015 while he was serving as the Commanding General, I MEF.**

the 32nd Commandant of the Marine Corps; Gen Anthony Zinni, former Commander in Chief, U.S. Central Command; and Gen John "Jack" Sheehan, Supreme Allied Commander for NATO wrote, "It [Force Design] will make the Marines less capable of countering threats from unsettled and dangerous corners of the world."

Gen Berger made it clear at the annual meeting of the MCA in September that he is a strong proponent of discussion and debate and freely admits that he welcomes opposing opinions. Quoting the *Marine Corps Gazette's* mission statement of "the free exchange of ideas, professional debate and discussion of issues of greatest importance to the Corps," the Commandant said he believes that mission is as relevant today as when Gen Lejeune established the *Gazette* more than 100 years ago. "For me personally as Commandant, [the *Gazette*] over the past three years is where I go to for fresh thinking and it has been a trigger for my own curiosity," he said. "Issues that are discussed in the pages of the *Gazette* have helped me shape my priorities as CMC ... As important as it is for me to define the priorities of the Marine Corps, also a place for me to refine. This debate has helped me make adjustments."

And while the disagreements have, on occasion, devolved into personal attacks, Gen Berger continues to welcome the

discussion. "Think about the significance of our culture and the way that it tolerates, especially in the Marine Corps, debate. We don't just tolerate it, we encourage it. And we like it. That's how the best ideas get to the top." The debate on Force Design is similar to the debate about Maneuver Warfare 40 years ago, according to Gen Berger. "In the 1980s, the debate on maneuver warfare; we vigorously ripped that apart and then put it back together. That was a true debate ... For every advocate there was an opponent."



RON LUNN



ANDREW NOH

**The MCA's annual meeting on Sept. 15 provided an opportunity for the Commandant to reunite with retired senior officials including SES Bryan Wood, LtGen Robert Ruark and LtGen David "Smoke" Beydler.**



He was quick to mention that he would be disappointed if everyone agreed with him on every topic. Noting that he reads opposing views in the *Gazette*, he said, “I don’t always agree with what everyone writes, but it makes me think.”

“I’m very proud that the Marine Corps has debate ... Debate is healthy, it makes us stronger,” he added.

He also recognizes the contribution younger Marines can bring to debates and discussions of the challenges facing the Corps. “You can always count on a captain or a staff sergeant or a major to bring you what you don’t want to hear, but you have to think about it,” he said with a chuckle at the MCA annual meeting. He noted that Marines are especially good at keeping their leaders straight. “They help me think through things two, three, four levels down, and that is invaluable to our senior leaders today.”

### Background

A native of Woodbine, Md., the future commandant attended Tulane University on a Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps (NROTC) scholarship. He was initially a Navy option midshipman destined for commissioning as an ensign, but thanks to the example set by the unit’s Assistant Marine Officer Instructor in his early days with the NROTC unit, Midshipman Berger changed his mind and realized that he wanted to be a Marine. Two of his sons

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**“I’m very proud that the Marine Corps has debate ... Debate is healthy, it makes us stronger.”**

have followed in his footsteps. One son is an infantry officer currently assigned to recruiting duty while the other is a veteran Marine noncommissioned officer who also served in the infantry. Both sons saw combat in Afghanistan. It is no surprise that when asked what his best day in the Corps was, the Commandant was quick to respond. “I have two. One was at Parris Island when my son became a Marine and the other was at Quantico when I commissioned my other son.”

Few officers have ever been as experienced and well-prepared to assume the role of the Corps’ senior leader as Gen

**Marines from 3/8, commanded by Col David Berger, patrol the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, during Operation Secure Tomorrow April 14, 2004.**



LCPL KEVIN MCCALL, USMC



**MajGen Berger, left, the commanding general of Task Force Leatherneck, walks with LtCol David P. Bradney, commanding officer of 1/7, at FOB Shamsher, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Aug. 9, 2012. (Photo by LCpl Jason Morrison, USMC)**

Berger. A veteran of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom where he commanded Regimental Combat Team 8 in Fallujah, Iraq and 1st Marine Division (Forward) in Afghanistan respectively, he has proven himself in combat. In addition, his Recon Company participated in Operation Desert Shield, and he commanded 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines during its deployment to Haiti in support of Operation Secure Tomorrow. He also led I Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Forces Pacific as a three star.

His staff assignments have also played a significant role in his development and knowledge of the threats facing our nation. As a field grade officer, Gen Berger served as a policy planner in the J-5 and later assumed the duties as Chief of Staff for Kosovo Force Headquarters. His assignments as Director of Operations in Plans, Policies and Operations at Headquarters Marine Corps and as the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration ensured that the future commandant understood and was well-prepared for the complexities of manning, training and equipping the Corps.

Gen Berger is also quick to acknowledge those who have helped him along the way. When asked who his mentors have been, the Commandant quickly answered, “My father. He was both a cheerleader and mentor.” He also listed LtGen Emil “Buck” Bedard, former Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies and Operations, and Admiral Scott Swift, who commanded U.S. Pacific Fleet when Gen Berger commanded Marine Forces Pacific. Two other retired Marine generals who were his classmates at the School of Advanced Warfighting

**In November 2021 Gen Berger released Talent Management 2030, his strategic guidance which called for a fundamental change to the current personnel system. “Transitioning to a talent management system will enable us to better harness and develop the unique skills and strengths of our Marines.”**



**CJCS Gen Joseph F. Dunford promoted the new CMC, Gen David H. Berger, at the Home of the Commandants, Washington D.C., July 11, 2019.**

when all three were majors, Lieutenant Generals Vince Stewart and Michael Dana, are two mentors and confidants in the Commandant's inner circle. "You need friends who will honestly tell you what they think."

Gen Joe Dunford, the 36th Commandant and 19th Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is another of the Gen Berger's mentors, which will come as no surprise to the Marine Corps community. Gen Berger said that Gen Dunford gave him especially good advice when he assumed the duties of Commandant, reminding him that his duties as a joint chief and advisor to the president were equally important to leading the service.

### Manpower Issues

Gen Berger's reserved often quiet demeanor can be a bit misleading. His passion for the Corps and more importantly, her Marines, however, is unmistakable and especially evident when asked what keeps him up at night. His answer was all about Marines. "What did you fail to do? What did you mean to do but didn't get done?"

"It's always about the people," Gen Berger added.

In November 2021 Gen Berger released Talent Management 2030, his strategic guidance which called for a fundamental change to the current personnel system. "We are a people-centric organization. That is at the core, the center of the Marine Corps." Talent Management 2030 describes his thoughts even more clearly. "Transitioning to a talent management system will enable us to better harness and develop the unique skills and strengths of our Marines, improve the performance of our units in competition and combat, and ensure that we remain 'most ready when the Nation is least ready.'" His prioritization on Talent Management is based on supporting individual Marines. His goals include empowering lower headquarters to make decisions on their Marines' futures to include giving commanding officers reenlistment authorities. All with the goal of "giving them [Marines] the ability to make decisions sooner in their careers."

The previous Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, LtGen David Ottignon, discussed the Commandant's Talent Management initiatives at a recent MCA luncheon. "It is a rebalance between the Marine and the Marine Corps." He echoed the Commandant's intentions



LCPL MORGAN BURGESS, USMC



CPL ANTHONY WARD JR., USMC

**MajGen Berger, second from right, CG, TF Leatherneck, stands watch with Marines from "Fox" Co, 2/7 at FOB Now Zad, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Nov. 22, 2012.**

further. "We do need to think about how we are transparent with Marines as we find those talented individuals, manage that talent and deliver to the organization."

And much of the Talent Management guidance starts with recruiting. Recent years have seen increased challenges in finding young men and women to join the Corps as the numbers of Americans qualified to enlist continues to trend downward. The COVID-19 pandemic alone drastically changed the way our recruiting force interacted with



potential future Marines as high schools were closed and personal interactions were severely limited. With the shrinking number of qualified potential applicants and an increasingly challenging job market, the Commandant said he believes recruiters will continue to accomplish the mission while maintaining the Corps' current qualifications. When asked if he would lower the standards to help fill the ranks, Gen Berger was blunt. "No."

He also knows that the focus can't simply be on recruiting. "We have to retain Marines that we have spent so much on recruiting and training," he said. "If we lose them after we got them highly trained ... they'll be watching from the bleachers."

### Veterans

As Gen Berger completes his 41st year of service, knowing his days in uniform are limited, he has an enhanced appreciation for those who have gone before him. At the recent Marine Corps Association annual meeting he paid tribute to three of the Corps' icons. "It was a tough summer in one respect for Marines. We lost three giants. Woody Williams, SgtMaj Canley and Butch Neal. Three giants in our history ... They are a big part of our Marine Corps story. When you think about the lives of those three, they are a good reminder how much we owe our veterans," he said.

"Once a Marine, always a Marine is not just a bumper sticker," Gen Berger said. "We don't take them [veterans] for granted. I have even more come to value their service,

**"The veterans—I need you. The Marine Corps needs you. We need your involvement. Not from the bleachers—be in the scrum. Right in the chaotic mess of where the Marine Corps needs to go. I need you to stay involved. I value your opinions."**

the contributions, the coaching, the teaching, the mentoring of our Marine veterans." He has often mentioned his appreciation for veteran Marines and their contributions to the Corps.

"The veterans—I need you. The Marine Corps needs you. We need your involvement. Not from the bleachers—be in the scrum. Right in the chaotic mess of where the Marine Corps needs to go. I need you to stay involved. I value your opinions."

The Marine Corps of the future hasn't turned its back on the Corps of the past; rather it has evolved to meet modern challenges by standing on the shoulders of those who served before. Honoring the Marine Corps' past while ensuring its future success is especially important to the Commandant, and as his first three years have shown, he is committed to the task. 🇺🇸

**Gen Berger, far right, CMC, salutes as the American flag is folded during the West Virginia State Memorial Service for Medal of Honor recipient CWO-4 Hershel "Woody" Williams in Charleston, W.Va., July 3.**



SGT KATHRYN ADAMS, USMC



# AT HOME AND AT THE BALL



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# We—the Marines

Compiled by Kyle Watts

## Combat-Hardened Marine Saves the Life of Man Hit by Car

On a cloudy afternoon in May, 1stSgt Jefferson Ortiz was driving with his wife through the small town of Vanceboro, N.C. Ortiz noticed vehicles in front of him coming to a halt near where many people were gathered in a field around something on the ground. Ortiz pulled over, told his wife to dial 911, and moved toward the crowd.

“Everything I saw led me to believe someone needed help, and that the people who were there did not understand, or were not comfortable with, providing that help,” said Ortiz. “I figured if I could make my way over there to see if there was anything I could do to help somebody ... I wanted to do that.”

Ortiz did not know that a man, while checking his mailbox moments before, had been hit by a car going more than 60 mph, launching him into a nearby field. Ortiz, a tall, wiry Marine, made his way through the spectators and found the man lying face down in the grass. One of the

man’s legs was mangled, turned inward, and showed signs of severe hemorrhaging.

“Everyone was telling me he’s dead,” said Ortiz. He asked the bystanders if anyone had checked for a pulse, and they all responded, ‘no.’

Ortiz carefully turned the man on his back, keeping the man’s spine immobile to prevent any further injury. The man’s skin was cold to the touch and Ortiz could not find a pulse. Ortiz opened the man’s eyelids to look for any kind of reaction in his pupils, but again, saw no signs of life. Ortiz told a bystander to hold the injured man’s head steady to immobilize the spine. While this was happening, Ortiz put his fingers on the man’s neck and found a very weak pulse. There was hope.

He began going through the fundamental procedures every Marine is trained to perform when treating a casualty: stop the bleeding, start the breathing, protect the wound, and treat for shock.

Ortiz assessed the full damage of the leg wound. He needed to put a tourniquet on the leg as soon as possible. He took

off the man’s belt and secured it above the open wound. One belt wasn’t strong enough, so another was needed. Ortiz used a donated belt and stick to create a makeshift tourniquet that stopped the profuse bleeding.

Ortiz also noticed the man had severely labored, shallow breathing, and blood was coming out of his mouth. He stuck a finger in the man’s mouth to remove any airway obstructions. Ortiz found the man’s front teeth had been knocked out and had settled in his throat. Ortiz removed them along with other debris, and the man’s breathing improved as he gasped for air.

“We have a chance,” thought Ortiz.

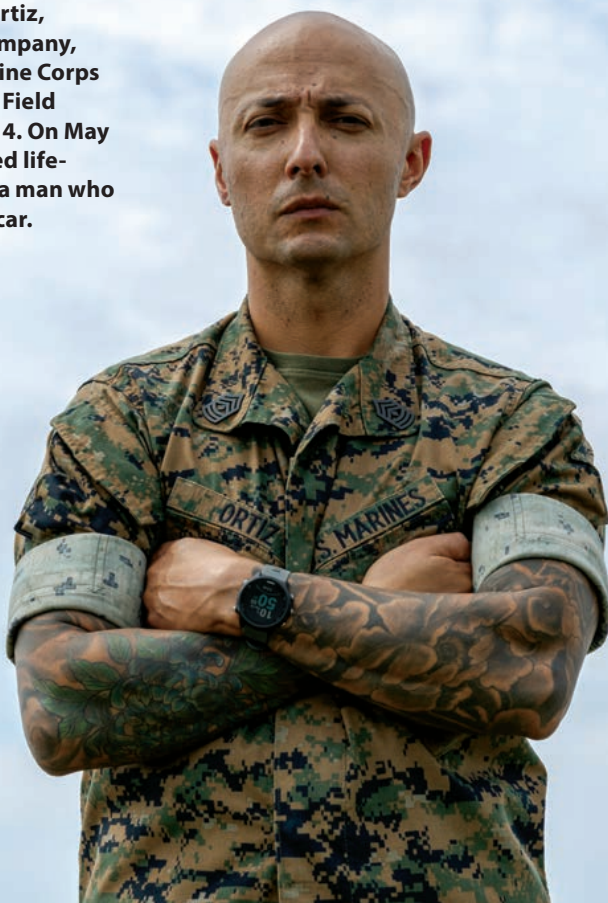
He used a bystander’s shirt to cover the wound on the man’s leg to prevent any dirt and debris from contaminating the wound. Minutes later, emergency medical services arrived on the scene. Ortiz assisted them with inserting an IV and loading the patient into an ambulance. The man survived his life-threatening injuries, thanks in part to the actions of Ortiz.

“For me, this is just business,” said Ortiz. “I was not concerned as to whether or not he was going to live. I just wanted to give him the opportunity. It was really cool to hear later on that the guy ended up making it through the first 24 hours, and that eventually he lived. He was able to survive that. That was rewarding.”

The business of saving lives is nothing new for Ortiz. The 38-year-old Marine has spent almost half of his life fighting in and preparing for war. The life-saving procedures he performed on the injured man were the same ones he performed on many of his fellow Marines in the heat of battle in places such as Haiti, Iraq and Afghanistan. Ortiz served in multiple infantry units, completing five combat deployments, and served as both a combat instructor and as a mountain-warfare instructor. He currently serves as the 1stSgt of the Airfield Operations Company from Marine Wing Support Squadron (MWSS) 271.

Ortiz later received the Navy-Marine Corps Commendation Medal for his actions that day. The medal is awarded to Marines and Sailors who distinguish themselves by heroic or meritorious achievement or service. Ortiz believes his actions were in keeping with the expectations of all Marines, and he hopes his Marines carry the legacy that was given by those who have gone before them.

**1stSgt Jefferson Ortiz,  
Air Operations Company,  
MWSS-271, at Marine Corps  
Auxiliary Landing Field  
Bogue, N.C., July 14. On May  
13, Ortiz performed life-  
saving actions on a man who  
had been hit by a car.**



CWO-2 BRYAN NYGAARD, USMC





SGT KARIS MATTINGLY, USMC

**Gen David H. Berger (above), the Commandant of the Marine Corps, congratulates Gen Michael E. Langley during a promotion ceremony at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., Aug. 6. Langley (right), who began his career in the Marine Corps as an artillery officer in 1985, is the first Black Marine to be promoted to the rank of general.**

“I want them, on a daily basis, to be the physical representation of what the American public expects out of the Marine Corps because our existence is about more than just winning battles,” said Ortiz. “It’s about recognizing our place in society is valued because of these things that Marines do. Let the American people know there is a reason we have a Marine Corps.”

CWO-2 Bryan Nygaard, USMC

### **Gen Michael Langley Becomes the Marine Corps’ First Black Four-Star General**

General Michael E. Langley was promoted to the rank of general on Aug. 6, in a ceremony at Marine Corps Barracks Washington. Gen David H. Berger,



SGT KARIS MATTINGLY, USMC

Commandant of the Marine Corps, promoted Langley, who became the first Black Marine to achieve the military’s most senior grade.

“In 43 years, we go from our first African American general to now our first—I think leading to many more—four-star African American general,” said Berger, referring to Lieutenant General Frank E. Peterson Jr.

Joining Langley at the ceremony were friends and family, including his father Willie C. Langley, who is an Air Force veteran. Gen Langley repeatedly talked about his father as his greatest mentor.

“My daddy told me to aim high, so I aimed as high as I could and found the few and the proud,” said Gen Langley, a comment met with laughter from the crowd, most of whom were Marines.

Langley was born in Shreveport, La., and grew up on a variety of military bases before settling in Texas. He graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1985. Langley has served in the Marine Corps for 37 years and saw his promotion as a sign to others that Marine Corps service rewards those who work hard to achieve their goals.

“The milestone and what it means to the Corps is quite essential,” said Langley. “Not because the mark in history, but what it will affect going forward, especially for those younger across society that want to aspire and look at the Marine Corps as an opportunity.”

Communications Directorate,  
Washington, D.C.





**SgtMaj Timothy Babcock, the Inspector-Instructor sergeant major for 1st Bn, 24th Marines, presents the folded American flag to Ann C. Clark at the funeral of her father, Medal of Honor recipient PFC Robert E. Simanek, at the Great Lakes National Cemetery, Holly, Mich., Aug. 21.**

### **Medal of Honor Recipient PFC Robert E. Simanek Laid to Rest**

Marine Corps Medal of Honor recipient Private First Class Robert Simanek was laid to rest at the Great Lakes National Cemetery in Holly, Mich., on Aug. 12. Friends and family gathered to watch a service conducted by Marines from Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C. Sergeant Major Timothy Babcock, the Inspector-Instructor (I&I) sergeant major from 1st Bn, 24th Marines, and Brigadier General Douglas Clark, Commanding General of the 4th Marine Division, joined the ceremony.

“For the I&I, it’s a primary mission to support military funeral honors for Marines, whether they serve four years, eight years, 20 years, or receive the Medal of Honor,” said Babcock. “As long as the

Marine gets an honorable discharge, it’s the Commandant’s intention that those Marines receive military honors when the family requests them.”

Simanek enlisted in 1951 and deployed to Korea the following year with Company F, 2nd Bn, 5th Marines. At the age of 22, he demonstrated unwavering courage as he dove on a live grenade to save his fellow Marines and lived to tell the story. In October 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower awarded Simanek the Medal of Honor. His citation read in part, “Determined to save his comrades when a hostile grenade was hurled into their midst, he unhesitatingly threw himself on the deadly missile, absorbing the shattering violence of the exploding charge in his body, and shielding his fellow Marines from serious injury or death.”



MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

**Above: PFC Robert E. Simanek, USMC (Ret), was recipient of the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Korean War.**



Most of the injuries Simanek sustained were to his leg. He was treated for severe nerve damage aboard USS *Haven* (AH-12) in Japan and was later flown to Great Lakes, Ill., to begin a yearlong recovery. After he recovered, he graduated from the University of Michigan. He married his wife, Nancy, and they had a daughter, Ann. He worked in several businesses before retiring in 1992. Simanek spent his later years in Novi, Mich., until his death at the age of 92.

“Today, I served as the Commandant’s representative at the funeral of an American hero,” said BGen Clark. “It is important to continue this tradition because the Medal of Honor is the U.S.’s highest and most prestigious military decoration. We will always remember and honor our Marines like PFC Simanek, who distinguished themselves with valor defending the greatest country in the world.”

The next *Lewis B. Puller*-class expeditionary mobile base ship, to be commissioned in 2024, will be named after Simanek.

*Editor’s note: To read more about PFC Simanek’s life, see In Memoriam in the October issue of Leatherneck.*

LCpl Ashley Corbo, USMC





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COURTESY OF BOB PARSONS

# “Not Bad for a Lance Corporal”

## Philanthropist, Entrepreneur Bob Parsons Turned the Discipline He Learned in the Marine Corps into High-Tech Success

By Joel Searls

**B**ob Parsons’ name is synonymous with entrepreneurship, resilience, and the American spirit. Parsons came from very humble beginnings and grew up in Baltimore, Md., fighting for every inch of success he achieved. He founded two successful tech companies, Parsons Technology (sold to Intuit in 1994 for \$64 million) and GoDaddy (sold to private equity investors in 2011 for \$2.25 billion). In 2012, Parsons started YAM Worldwide Inc., for his entrepreneurial endeavors in power sports, golf, real estate, marketing, innovation, and philanthropy. Parsons’ organizations include Parsons Xtreme Golf (PXG), Harley Davidson of Scottsdale, YAM Properties and, most importantly, The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation, which has awarded donations to 100 charities and organizations worldwide since 2012.

I recently spoke with Parsons to discuss how his time in the Marine Corps contributed to his later success in life.



COURTESY OF BOB PARSONS

**Bob Parsons (top), founder of internet hosting provider GoDaddy, attributes much of his success to his Marine Corps training. Parsons (above) went to boot camp at MCRD Parris Island and was an infantry Marine in Vietnam.**



## ■ How were you inspired to join the Marines?

Well, you must understand I was terrible in school. Just terrible. If I were a kid today, I would be pumped so full of Ritalin! My senior year, I discovered the opposite sex and alcohol, which didn't help my schooling either. I was failing several subjects and I was pretty sure I was not going to graduate.

One day ... in the spring of 1968, I had two friends, Aggie Pirocus and Charlie Mason, tell me that we were going to talk to a Marine Corps recruiter and ask if I would like to join them. Aggie had already joined and was helping the recruiter ... so Charlie and I went down with him. The recruiter had us at "Hello." We walked in and he said, "How are you men doing?" This guy looked like Sergeant Rock; everything was starched, and the creases were perfect, and he was in incredible shape. He asked us to wait a moment and went and rattled in his closet a little bit, came out and said, "I was gonna pour you men a drink, but I'm all out." I think one of us said, "Don't even worry. We'll bring it next time." He said, "Nah, it's okay. We'll drink my stuff." Thinking back on it, I am pretty sure his stuff never existed.

After about an hour, this guy knew he had us and said, "If you want, I'll see if I can get you in," and we said, "Absolutely!" He told us there were three reasons we should enlist now. No. 1, Charlie and I could join on the buddy plan and go through training together. No. 2, we didn't have to leave for Parris Island until August. Somehow or another we thought Parris Island in August would be a good thing. At least we'd have our summer at home in Baltimore. Then, the third reason, which made all the sense in the world to us, was that we didn't have to worry about getting drafted into the Army. We said, "That sounds good," and then he said, "We're going to have to check your grades and so forth," and my thought was, "Uh oh!"

I was 17 at the time so my mother had to sign my papers. She was a little reluctant, but she finally did. I went back with my papers two weeks later, still worried about the recruiter checking my grades, and he said, "Robert, we think you'll make a fine Marine." Our first orders were to report to Fort Holabird for transfer to Parris Island.

When I showed my orders to my teachers, they knew what was happening, they all passed me! In many ways, I owe the Marine Corps my high school diploma. The more I thought about going to boot camp, the more I could not wait to get there, and the same was true for my buddy, Charlie.

When we got down to Parris Island, the DI that got on the bus didn't exactly say, "How are you men doing?"

Charlie and I were both made riflemen.

## ■ What was your experience in Vietnam?

My unit was "Delta" Company, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines and we operated on Hill 190. We were in Quảng Nam Province, where there were rice paddies as far as you could see on one side and mountains and jungle on the other side. Our job was to keep the North Vietnamese Army out of those villages, which we did by running ambushes at night. When I got there, the most senior man in my squad had only been there for six weeks ... The squad was ambushed a few days before I got there. Four Marines were KIA [Killed in Action], and one Marine was seriously WIA [Wounded in Action]. I was one of the replacements.

After meeting with my squad, I sat on a wall while I was

waiting to go into the bush and thought, "Wow, I'm going to be here for 13 months. The most senior guy here has only been here for six weeks. How in the world am I going to live through this?" Then it occurred to me as I looked out at the valley that I am going to die here. When I accepted that, everything changed for me. Then I made myself two promises. The first promise was I would do everything I could to do my job as a United States Marine. I wanted to make my folks back home proud and not let the guys in my squad down. My second promise was I wanted to do everything I could to be alive for mail call.

Many of my buddies from the war told me they accepted death. They said, "I thought for sure I was going to die." I believe that made us a much more formidable combat unit. We were worried



COURTESY OF BOB PARSONS

**The bunker in Vietnam (above and below) where Parsons served with Delta Co, 1st Battalion, 26th Marines on Hill 190 in Quang Nam Province.**



COURTESY OF BOB PARSONS

about one thing and one thing only: doing our job. I hadn't been with my squad for four hours when I saw my first combat. A fellow Marine was hurt horrifically—his name was Ermel Hunt.

That night our squad was set up in one place and a sister squad was set up in a location a couple clicks apart. We had a corpsman with us, and they did not. We got a radio call from Hill 190 that said, "Get your ass over there as quick as you can with the corpsman." I remember running through those rice paddies ... We get there and their squad leader, Larry Blackwell, was in the rice paddy and he was losing his cookies. He looked like he was in shock and the Huey was going to land right on top of him. When I saw it, I took off and started pushing Larry

until we hit a rice paddy dike and went ass over apple cart into the adjacent paddy. The Huey missed us both. At first, he was pissed at me, and then he realized what had happened, so then he thanked me. Did I save his bacon? Oh, for sure.

The second night we were moving out on an ambush, and a Marine named Ray Livsey was walking point. He used to call himself Sgt Rock ... walking through a rice paddy is one nasty thing ... walking on the rice paddy dikes was so much easier. The problem was that the North Vietnamese knew it was easy. The point man made the decision if he was willing to walk on the dikes or not, and Ray said, "I'm going to walk on the dikes." It wasn't five minutes, KABOOM! The explosion mangled his legs. I helped carry him about a mile back to the medevac point.

When we got back to Hill 190 the next morning, I went to clean my rifle. After falling over and over while carrying Ray, my rifle

In the Marine Corps back then, you had to be wounded three times before you could opt out. I don't know if that's changed, but it was three times, assuming you were physically able. When I got to Okinawa, they did a full physical since I came from the hospital and saw my elbow still hadn't healed. So, they put me into a casualty company.

Eventually all my wounds healed, and I told the doctor over at the sick bay I wanted to go back. I said, "Sir, I am all healed and I'm ready to go back." The doctor said to me, "Parsons, you did what you needed to do. If you want, I'll keep you here all war, son." I said to him, "Nah, I want to go back. I want to be with my squad." Even though it had only been a month; I was closer to them than so many people. He said, "OK." He put it through and several days later I got notice: "Here's your orders. You're going to leave in the morning. And, your payroll records,

which had been lost since you were wounded, have finally showed up." I was given four months' pay and told to, "Go off base, have yourself a good time, and be back at midnight."

At 3 in the morning, I was still whooping it up. As I'm walking, the rain is coming down sideways. I see a guy walking towards me. I recognized it was the guy who I saved that first night in the bush, Larry Blackwell. He told me that he was wounded when his squad was ambushed. Because it was his third time wounded, he didn't have to go back to a rifle company.

It was his third Purple Heart, and he was now stationed in Marine Corps intelligence ... He stops, and he says to me, "You know you saved my life," and I said, "I know." ... He says, "The guy that runs the print shop just left, and we haven't put someone in that position yet." He said, "I can get that for you," and I said, "Really, how?" He goes, "Well, the gunnery sergeant is a friend of mine, and when I tell him that you saved my life and that you've already been there and you've got a Purple Heart, he'll probably be OK with assigning you instead of someone just coming through." I said, "I appreciate that, brother." My orders were for 7 a.m. and it would be tough for him to make a change. And,

in a way, I wanted to go back.

When I arrived back on base, I was immediately arrested for not being back by midnight. I said, "I was wounded, and the Navy lost my payroll records and I'm going back to Vietnam tomorrow." The second lieutenant said, "Get him the f--- out of here," which was him being nice to me. I went back to the barracks and a couple of hours later woke up with a hangover from hell. Whoever was managing the formation called my name and said, "I've got orders that you're now stationed here on Okinawa."

Blackwell came to me a couple of months later and said, "Parsons, I came over to say goodbye. I requested a transfer back to a rifle company. I can't deal with it here." I said, "Brother, good luck and I'm going to miss you." A couple of weeks later I also put in my request to go back to my squad in Vietnam. When the request got to the company gunny, [he] looked at it and said, "Parsons, you're requesting to go back to your unit?" I said, "Yeah," and he said, "Have you lost your mind? You'll get yourself killed, son." He ripped it up and said, "Request denied." I requested again a few months later and was denied again.



COURTESY OF BOB PARSONS

**Parsons was wounded a month after he arrived in Vietnam and subsequently received a Purple Heart.**

was straight mud from the tip of the barrel to the beginning of the chamber. Had I pulled the trigger, oh my! Thank God that didn't happen, but I learned you've got to keep the barrel up and out of the mud.

I did every job. I walked "tail end Charlie," which is the safest but also the creepiest job. Then I carried a radio for a while. During Vietnam that was the only communication for the squad, so being the radio man was like wearing a sign that said, "Please shoot me first." Eventually, I volunteered for the point team, which is how I got hurt.

One month to the day after I arrived, we were going through a village. I'm walking second point; Gene was first point and Gene's a real high-stepping guy, so he steps over this trip wire and of course, I hit it. When the trap exploded, at first, I didn't know it was me. As I was laying on the ground, I reached over to stop some of the bleeding on my leg and I realized my elbow joint was outside of my arm ... The boys carried me back and then I was medevacked in a jeep. I eventually ended up in Yokosuka Naval Hospital in Japan for the better part of two months. Then I received orders back to the bush.



An entrepreneur at heart, the veteran Marine established Parsons Xtreme Golf (PXG), a company that manufactures custom-fitted golf clubs.



COURTESY OF BOB PARSONS

## ■ How did your Marine Corps experience factor into your return home from Vietnam?

When I came home from the war, I was a different guy in a lot of ways. First, I worked in a steel mill as a laborer. Then, another job I applied for and got was a machinist apprentice.

Eventually, I saw an ad for the University of Baltimore, [that was] focused on veterans. You didn't need to take the entrance exams or provide your high school grades. If you had a GED or graduated from high school, that was sufficient. My cousin lent me the money to pay the first advance on my tuition. That's how I was able to go to college and study accounting. Lo and behold, I graduated Magna Cum Laude. Then I took the CPA exam and passed it the first time. I bought a book later and taught myself how to program a computer and became a hobbyist. I used that book to start my first company, Parsons Technology. I would never have done any of this without the Marine Corps! The Marine Corps totally changed me.

Here's what they taught me: they taught me the importance of discipline—not discipline in the form of punishment, although there was plenty of that. They taught me that responsibility is sacred. If you have a job to do, you must have the discipline and backbone to see it through. You don't have to want to do it, but you must do it to the best of your ability to not let the guy next to you down.

In enlisted boot camp, when somebody screws up, the whole platoon gets punished except for the guy that screws up. If someone is caught with pogy bait in the barracks, your brothers in



COURTESY OF BOB PARSONS

A gift made for Parsons by 6th Engineer Support Battalion.

the platoon are going to push all the racks to the middle, and everybody is going to be doing squats as low as they can with their hands behind their head, which is very painful after a while. They go around the barracks repeatedly and the guy with the pogy bait stands there and eats his candy bar and watches them suffer. When everybody passes him, they usually say, "I'm going

to f---ing kill you,” but what that drives across is that we operate as a unit. If you don’t operate the way you are supposed to, it hurts the whole unit. The unit is only as strong as the weakest link. That really brought the concept of teamwork home, and teamwork is our calling card.

The other two lessons I learned that helped me a lot were that I could accomplish much more than I ever dreamed I could, and I had a right to be proud. I’ll say it again—everything I have ever accomplished I owe to the United States Marine Corps and the lessons I learned while serving.

## ■ How did your Marine Corps experience in Vietnam change and motivate you to start your own company?

I came back from Vietnam with a new work ethic, but not all the changes in me were positive. I was a different guy. The guy that went over there was on the happy-go-lucky side, liked being around people, liked going to different events and so forth. The guy who came home had a short temper, was always a little bit depressed, occasionally, when he was alone, he’d cry and didn’t want to be around people. He buried himself in his work and that kept him going.



Sometimes I think, without PTSD, I wouldn’t be as successful as I am. I was a worker bee to get my first business off the ground and wrote all the programming code with no formal education. I would come to work at 8 in the morning, let’s say Monday, straight through to Wednesday at 8 in the morning, and about 8 o’clock at night on Wednesday I’d start to slow down and not get much done. I knew it was time to quit when I would start to hallucinate and hear voices that weren’t there. I worked those crazy hours until I got my business up off the ground, and I did it because I loved it. Then I took it a little easier, but I worked hard every day, again, because I loved it. Would I have done that without the Marine Corps? No ... They taught me the importance of hard work. I couldn’t outspend my competitors, I couldn’t out-hire them, but I could outwork them.

My making peace with probable death in Vietnam 100 percent allowed me to focus on what I had to do. I will tell you: I’m no hero. And many Marines saw way more combat than I did. I’m sure camaraderie exists in other branches, but nowhere does it exist like in the Marine Corps. I mean, nobody else celebrates their birthdays. Do you ever hear of the Air Force celebrating birthdays? We have a celebration at my company every year. Anyone that was in the Marine Corps can participate, and I even let a few squids [Navy] into the event. We have a cake, drink a shot, and sing the Marine Corps hymn. Everybody looks forward to it and everybody gets “Semper Fi’d,” and we share a little story here or there. We keep it alive.

Everything we do is a tribute to the Marine Corps. Look at the PXG logo ... that’s military stencil. Our clubs, our best irons, the model number is 0311. Another line of our irons is 0317. We have a “Heroes Program,” which verifies service and gives significant discounts to veterans, guys and gals in the military, law enforcement, firefighters, and EMTs. We call them all heroes.

## ■ What are you currently focused on and what do you want your legacy to be?

Every year, my wife and I give Semper Fi & America’s Fund \$10 million. We also donate money to help prevent suicide. We help Team Rubicon, which give veterans a purpose, something to do ... We recently donated \$5 million to the Mount Sinai Center for Psychedelic Healing. One million of that went to the Bronx VA, where they are doing field trials with veterans. They understand as much as anybody about PTSD. We helped MAPS (Multi-Disciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) with \$2 million for their third field trial intended to help with MDMA FDA approval. Right now, our foundation donates an average of a million dollars every 14 days to charity. That’s not bad for a lance corporal.

*Author’s bio: Joel Searls is a creative and business professional in the entertainment industry. He writes for We are the Mighty. He serves in the Marine Corps Reserve and enjoys time with his family and friends.* 🐾

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**Bob and his wife, Renee, founded The Bob & Renee Parsons Foundation, which has made significant donations to 100 charities and organizations worldwide since 2012.**





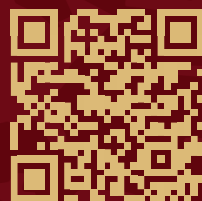
# GIVE THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING THIS SEASON.

Make a gift to the **Marine Corps Association Foundation** during the month of December and triple the power of your gift through our matching gift challenge.

All donations will be matched two dollars for every dollar donated until we reach \$50,000.

Your generosity this season will ensure our Marines will be ready to succeed by providing the leadership, mentoring, and development programs they need all year long.

## GIVE TODAY



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Story and photos by  
Sgt John Martin, USMC

**T**he Marines who manned the isolated base at Khe Sanh, South Vietnam, needed help. The members of the 26th Marine Regiment and its supporting units were surrounded by an estimated tens of thousands of North Vietnamese regulars. For 77 days, commencing with the first heavy enemy bombardment on Jan. 21, 1968, the Marines had been under the constant threat

**When the 26th Marines were surrounded by thousands of North Vietnamese at Khe Sanh, the only way supplies could reach them was by air. But the enemy was zeroed in on our aircraft. The problem was solved by a nearly incredible feat of engineering.**

of an all-out enemy attack. The only supply route was by air, and several fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters had been destroyed by enemy artillery landing and taking off from the base.

But no one was sitting idly by during the crisis. In addition to the Khe Sanh Marines' own reply from the artillery pieces of the 1st Battalion, 13th Marines, U.S. aircraft strafed, bombed and blasted enemy strongholds in the surrounding hills. On April 1, Operation Pegasus was initiated with the mission of clearing the land supply route to Khe Sanh and easing the pressure on the Marines who were holding it.

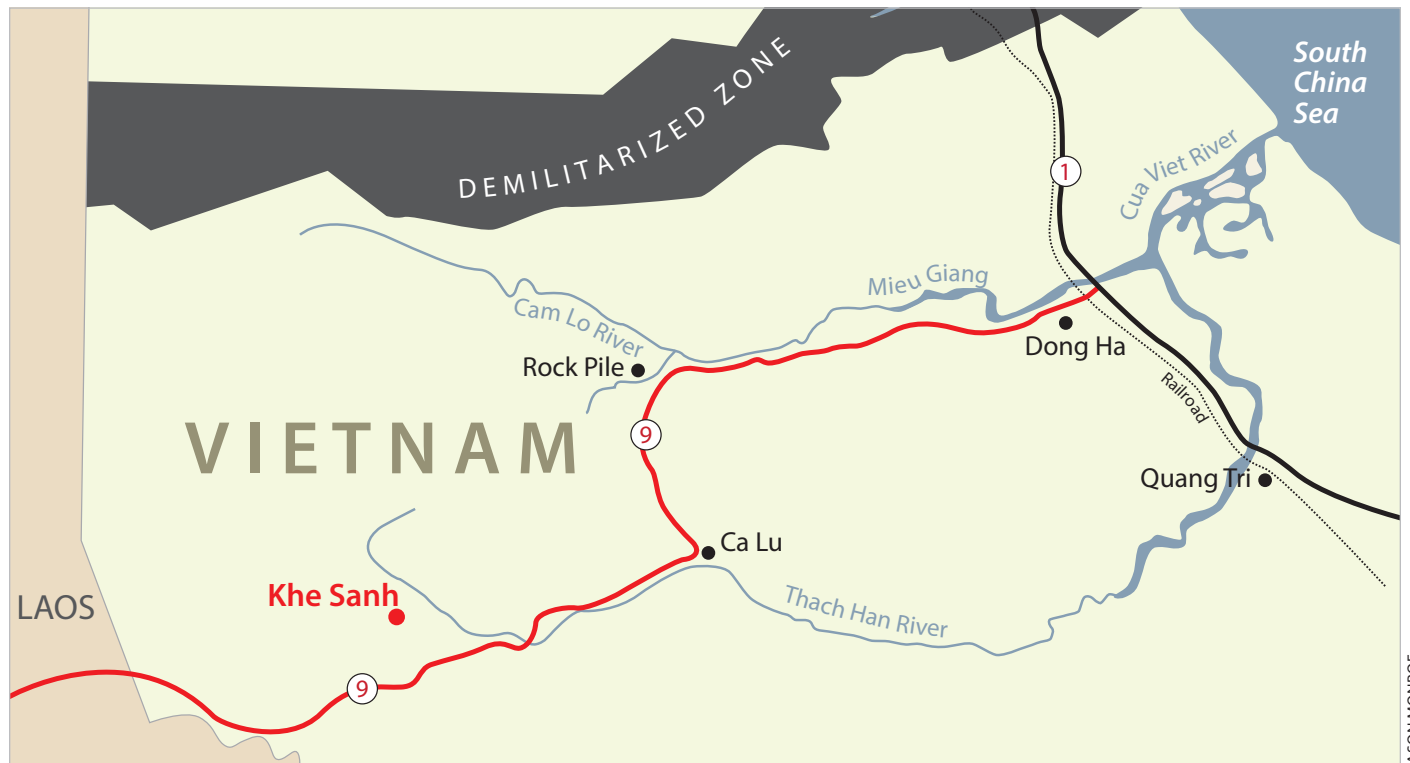
Route 9 stretched from Dong Ha in the east, through Ca Lu and Khe Sanh, and eventually to the Laotian border. From Dong Ha to Ca Lu the road was clear for convoys. But from Ca Lu to Khe Sanh it ran along the twisting and picturesque Quang Tri River and then over the mountainous hills to Khe Sanh.

And ever since the enemy had planted an ambush on the road on Jan. 13, 1968, the area had been considered hostile territory and the lifeline to Khe Sanh had been cut off from U.S. traffic. Removing the enemy forces from that area was the first objective of Pegasus.

After B-52 strikes and Marine artillery had saturated the hills adjacent to the road, the U.S. Army's 1st Air Cavalry Division began to sweep the terrain above Route 9, moving toward Khe Sanh.

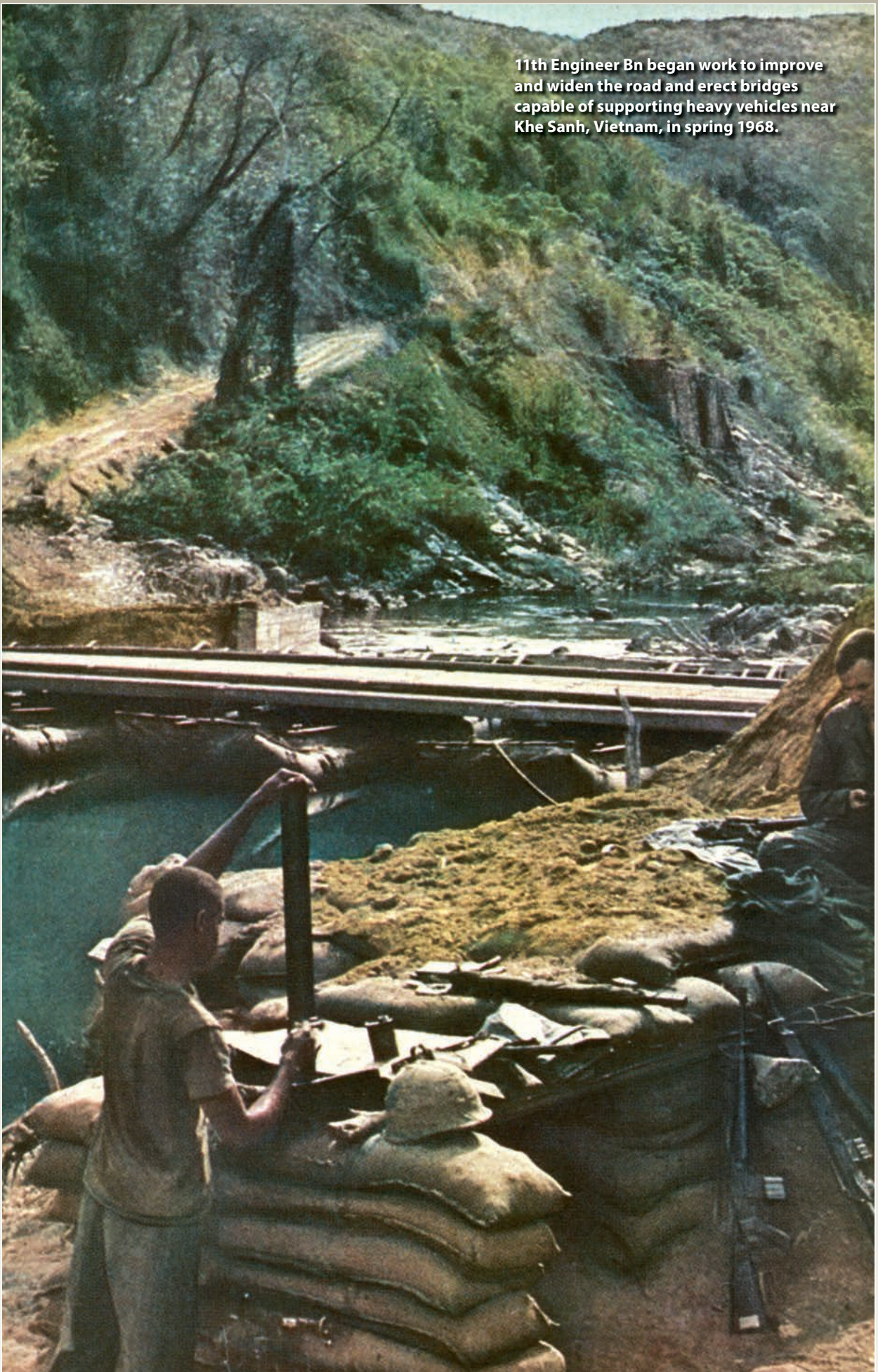
The Marine phases of the penetration began with the 1st Marine Regiment, composed of its own 1st and 3rd Battalions and the 2nd Battalion from the 3rd Marines. They moved directly through the valley, clearing out enemy positions which had escaped the onslaught of the air and artillery strikes.

Almost directly in the wake of the 1st Marines, the 11th Engineer Bn began work on the road. The Marine engineers had been given until April 12 to fulfill their





11th Engineer Bn began work to improve and widen the road and erect bridges capable of supporting heavy vehicles near Khe Sanh, Vietnam, in spring 1968.



SGT JOHN MARTIN, USMC



mission to improve and widen the road to accommodate traffic to Khe Sanh and, where necessary, erect bridges capable of supporting the heavy vehicles which would soon be moving up and down the road.

Although the road bore the designation of Route 9, the 11th Engineers quickly posted their trademark signs as fast as they moved up the road. The signs, unofficially, renamed the 18 miles of winding highway “USMC 11.”

The 3rd Platoon from the 3rd Bridge Co kicked off the engineering operation when they began putting up the first bridge on April 1, 1968. They were succeeded by “Alfa” Co, Bravo Co and Delta Co of the engineers, all of whom played a curious game of leapfrog in opening the road and building the bridges.

According to First Lieutenant Duncan Hoffman, Executive Officer, Alfa Co, as soon as the road was cleared far enough ahead, one company of engineers would begin work on a bridge. Then, as quickly as another site was open, a second company would leapfrog the construction at the first site to begin work farther down the line. The pace quickened from there.

The 11th Engineers provided bridges at 18 crossings, including several supplementary bridges called “bypasses,” and completed the project by April 11, one day ahead of their deadline. Commencing with Bridge 9/17 (the 17th bridge on Route 9 and the first bridge past Ca Lu), they

**As soon as the road was cleared far enough ahead, one company of engineers would begin work on a bridge.**

**Then, as quickly as another site was open, a second company would leapfrog the construction at the first site to begin work farther down the line.**

worked their way up to the Rao Quan Valley which preceded the hill route to Khe Sanh and planted Bridge 9/34 at the bottom of that valley.

The going was nearly always rough, the dust gathering on the Marines’ sweat-soaked bodies like insects on flypaper. But one thing which added speed to the engineers’ efforts was the fact that the French had worked along the same route years before during the French-Indochina War. Although the North Vietnamese Army had blown up all the remaining French bridges during their activities of the past year, the sound masonry abutments still remained in most cases, and these provided a tailor-made foundation upon which the Marines could improve.

Even this, however, was not always possible. In several cases, at Bridge 9/34 for example, the French supports were too far apart to allow the engineers to construct a practical bridge in limited time. In these cases, bypasses were constructed, and the French abutments were

turned into guard posts or used as parking spots for tanks.

The engineers constructed the bypasses by first positioning several large cylindrical steel culverts lengthwise in the riverbed, allowing the water to flow through them. The culverts were then packed into place with numerous sandbags and covered with tons of dirt from dump trucks. Bulldozers carved out a supplementary road leading to the bypass and smoothed over the dirt on top of the bypass to form a driving surface.

In addition to the bypasses which were constructed at all sites where a conventional “bulk” bridge was impractical, bypasses were also set up alongside the places where there were bulk bridges. Further, at a site where only a bypass could be built, two bypasses were made.

This served a twofold purpose. First, the bypasses allowed an easier means of crossing for heavier equipment, such as tanks. Second, they imposed a double challenge to any enemy sneaking in to

**Sandbags were used in the construction of culverts beneath the improved roadway. (Photo by Sgt John Martin, USMC)**







SGT JOHN MARTIN, USMC

**Left: One of the engineers maintained communications via radio with other units repairing USMC 11.**

which the road was cut were severely cratered. Explosives had to be used to dislodge more dirt and the excess was then pushed around by the bulldozers to fatten up the road.

One factor which aided the 'dozers in their quick improvements on the road was the old surfacing laid by the French. In only a few places could the hard surface still be seen through the layer of brown dust which covered the road and clouded up behind each passing vehicle. Elsewhere, although parts of it had been broken up by artillery and other spots had crumbled from long use, the hard chunks still provided an excellent foundation upon which the 11th Engineers could build.

With the old abutments still standing and the road surface still evident, further earmarks of another era were found in abandoned French bunkers alongside the road. It was obvious that Route 9 had played a significant part in the history of the struggles of South Vietnam. One of the most vivid and tragic sites of French activity was present in the vicinity of Bridge 9/34, spanning the Rao Quan River deep in the valley of the same name. The Rao Quan River is a tributary to the Quang Tri River. None of the 18 bridges, in fact, crossed the Quang Tri itself, but spanned the streams which lead into it.

Evidence of French attempts to bridge the Rao Quan lie within 150 meters of the present 9/34. At one point, the river is still somewhat bridged by the twisted wreckage of a now rusted steel suspension framework which was blasted from its high supports, 50 feet above the riverbed, by the enemy many years ago.

Close by, a cement bridge with steel reinforcing cables protruding from its broken body, also lay in bits and chunks in the river where it met the same fate as its metal counterpart.

A third French bridge was never completed. Its supports jut out from both sides of the enclosing hills, but the signs were apparent that the work had been suddenly abandoned before completion. Why, no one seems to know.

The Marine version of 9/34 is a floating bridge which consists of a wooden platform resting across four rubber pontoon-type floats. The floats were heli-lifted in by the Army's CH-54 "Sky Crane."

Cooperation between the Marines and the Army had been outstanding all through Pegasus, and the 11th Engineers received a special commendation from the com-



SGT JOHN MARTIN, USMC

**Working from floats on a pontoon bridge, engineers gauged the depth of a river over which USMC 11 would pass.**

attempt to blow up one of the bridges.

More security came with the Marines of Fox Co, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines. Men like Private First Class Richard Miller and Private Richard Farnsworth were strategically detailed along the road at every bridge site to set up bunkers as guard posts and to defend the bridges if an attack materialized.

Another observation post against enemy activity was "The Rock Pile." This im-

posing rocky crag sat along "USMC 11," and the Marines who manned it had an excellent view of several of the bridges near Ca Lu.

The guard duty was easier in places. Many of the bridges were built as little as 75 to 100 meters apart. Miles wound between others.

Problems, of course, were bound to occur as the road work progressed. At two different areas, the steep cliffs into



manding general of the 1st Air Cavalry Division for their work on the road.

Army helicopters were used on other bridges too. Bridge 9/28, according to Major Joseph C. Thorp, 11th Engineers S-2 and S-3 officer, was fitted with a 30-foot platform atop the old French abutments. Bridges 9/31 and 9/33 both received 38-foot, 4-inch spans. In each case, the bridges were lowered by the helicopter while Marine engineers on the ground guided the heavy platform into position with guy lines.

But the action wasn't all on the bridges. PFC Kevin Rooney, Fox Company, was guarding Bridge 9/32 and commented, "There hasn't been much action this close to Ca Lu, but they get more further on up the road."

Rooney was right. Delta Co, 11th Engineers, was patrolling the section of road nearest to Khe Sanh, and they were kept busy. A portion of the company, led by 1stLt Floyd Campbell, captured two NVA soldiers almost at Khe Sanh's doorstep and discovered several more enemy bunkers in the area which they cleaned out with Willy Peter grenades. PFC Larry E. Ramsey, a combat engineer

**Below: PFC Kevin Rooney found time to hack off several days' growth of beard during a break in the construction work.**



with Delta Co, was usually the grenade heaver, and PFC Larry E. Sherbert and PFC J.R. Albert were always close by with more handfuls of the hot stuff to back him up.

With the road finished by April 11 and officially opened April 12, the first vehicle rolled into Khe Sanh. It was a jeep, and its chief passenger was Lieutenant Colonel V.A. Perry, commander of the 11th Engineers. But a jeep is a versatile vehicle, and with the road making treacherous curves in places and plagued by bumps and dips, LtCol Perry knew that one final test had to be made before the road could be considered in satisfactory condition.

He ordered his men to take the "low-bed" to Khe Sanh.

"If that low-bed can make it," said Staff Sergeant Donald Thompson, NCOIC of the engineers' motor transport section, "anything can make it."

The low-bed was a large, cumbersome, 5-ton truck and, for a trailer, pulled a long flat-bed designed for hauling heavy equipment.

At 9:30 a.m. on Easter Sunday the low-bed rolled out of Ca Lu and with SSgt

SGT JOHN MARTIN



With a bridge completed and ready for heavy vehicular traffic, the engineers paused to watch a fellow Marine who was cooling off in the river.



SGT JOHN MARTIN

**But the big goal had been achieved, that of opening the supply route to Khe Sanh. And, with Marines in Khe Sanh already branching out into the surrounding hills to chase down the enemy, it looked like the recent activities of Pegasus had served their purpose.**

Thompson and 1stLt Bud Westmoreland, motor transport officer, bouncing ahead in a Jeep, it began its slow, plodding journey up USMC 11.

At 11 a.m. the low-bed rolled over the pontoon bridge at 9/34 and then up the steep hills toward Khe Sanh. The supply route to the Marine base was open and ready for business.

With convoys now going back and forth along the road, things began to slack off. Enemy shelling of Khe Sanh had picked up again but none of the enemy showed up along the road and it was assumed that the NVA had vacated the area for the time being. No chances were taken, however. Marine artillery was called in on several

of the hills near the bridges every night.

The Marines stood their guard posts with alert eyes. But now, with a little time off, members of Fox Company, like Corporal Terry A. Kelley and PFC David J. Gardner, took advantage of a job well done by going swimming in the ice-cold waters of the Rao Quan River. The Marines found other sport in bicycles, apparently left behind by the enemy in their hasty departure.

A good share of the engineers were still hard at work, though. Many of the supplementary bypasses were still under construction next to the bulk bridges. They had to be completed as soon as possible so that the convoys could use them while the professional-type bridges

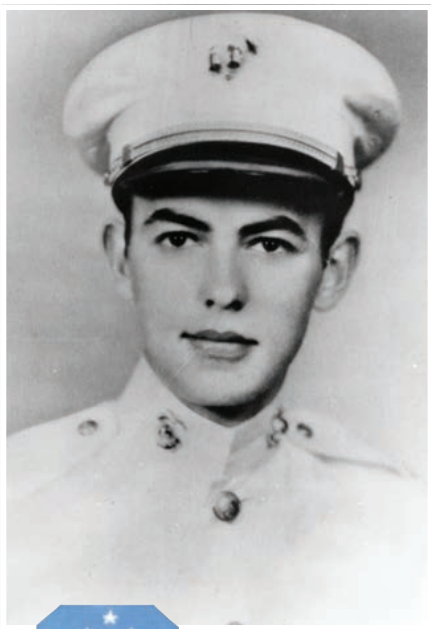
were being moved elsewhere in Vietnam.

But the big goal had been achieved, that of opening the supply route to Khe Sanh. And, with Marines in Khe Sanh already branching out into the surrounding hills to chase down the enemy, it looked like the recent activities of Pegasus had served their purpose.

And, in addition to the road, the engineers could count several things at Ca Lu itself among their recent achievements. Upon arriving there, they had built almost all of the bunkers, cleared fields of fire, set up ammunition and oil supply points, and had constructed the berms (fortified parking places) where the helicopters could land.

On the road itself, they had put in an estimated 40,000 man-hours in meeting their deadline and had used more than 5,000 equipment hours.

And one piece of that equipment, now sitting back at Ca Lu, sums up the whole theme of the engineers' accomplishments on USMC 11. On one side of the truck is painted the words: "If you can't swim it; bridge it." The other side reads: "Khe Sanh or bust." 🐼



**Medal of Honor recipient Capt Richard E. Fleming.**  
(Photo courtesy of Congressional Medal of Honor Society)

# FATAL FLIGHT:

## Midway 1942 and A Sole Medal of Honor

By Col Charles A. Jones, USMCR (Ret)

**T**his year's 80th anniversary of the Battle of Midway provides an opportunity to recognize and honor the sole Medal of Honor recipient who fought in the epic World War II naval battle between aircraft carriers of the United States and Japan, the battle that turned the tide toward the Allies and away from Japan.

That battle's recipient of the nation's highest award for combat bravery is perhaps little known in Marine Corps history: Captain Richard E. Fleming, USMCR, a pilot stationed on Midway. One might expect a Medal of Honor at Midway to have been awarded to a

Navy carrier-based pilot since the battle primarily involved their ships and their aircraft, but Fleming was a pilot in a Marine squadron based on Midway, not on an aircraft carrier.

### Little Known Hero

Who was this largely unknown Marine Corps hero? Richard E. Fleming, born on Nov. 2, 1917, in St. Paul, Minn., joined the Marine Corps in 1939. He completed flight training, finishing first in his class, and was commissioned an officer on Dec. 6, 1940. In 1942, Fleming was a dive bomber pilot attached to Marine Scout-Bombing Squadron 241 (VMSB-241) stationed



A Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber displayed at the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Fla. Capt Fleming flew a Dauntless during the first day of the Battle of Midway in June 1942.

COL CHARLES JONES, USMCR (RET)



A Vought SB2U Vindicator dive bomber is displayed at the National Naval Aviation Museum in Pensacola, Fla. On the second day of the Battle of Midway, Capt Fleming was flying a Vindicator when he attacked the Japanese cruiser *Mikuma*. (Photo by Col Charles Jones, USMCR (Ret))

on Midway Island, which is part of the Hawaiian Island Archipelago.

On June 4, 1942, Fleming flew a Douglas SBD Dauntless dive bomber in the command section along with squadron commander Major Lofton Henderson. Henderson was shot down during an attack on a Japanese aircraft carrier and was listed as missing in action. For his leadership during the attack, Henderson was awarded a Navy Cross posthumously. Guadalcanal's Henderson Field was later named for him.

With the loss of Henderson, Fleming led the remainder of the squadron's aircraft in the attack and released his bomb at a dangerously low level (400 feet). Fleming sustained two minor wounds while his Dauntless had 179 hits from Japanese ship anti-aircraft batteries.

While returning from a night attack on June 4, the new squadron commander,

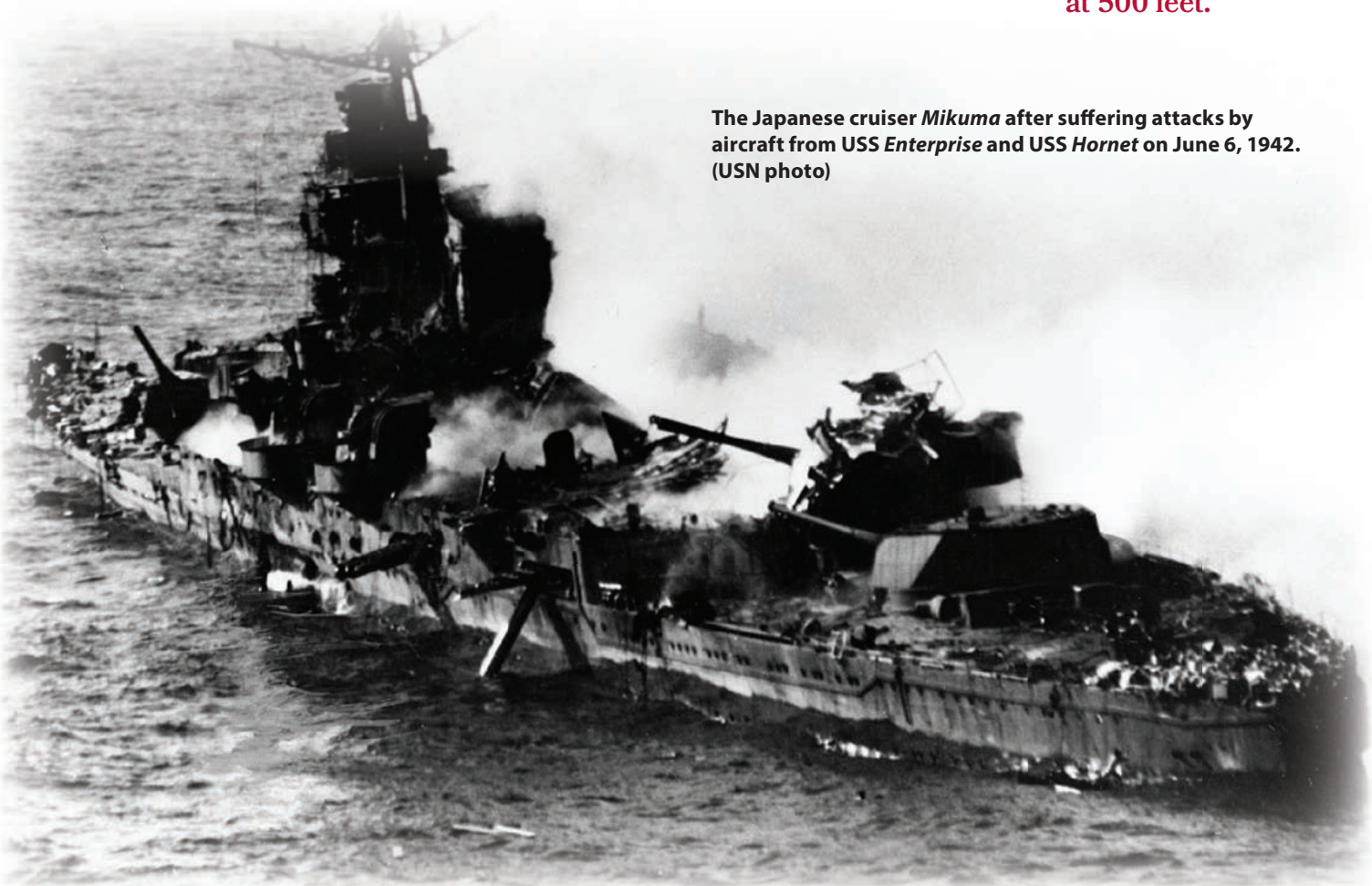


Major Benjamin Norris, was lost, evidently going down in inclement and overcast weather. Fleming returned to Midway despite total darkness and the hazardous weather conditions. On June 5, although he was operating on only four hours of sleep, Fleming led a division of Vought SB2U-3 Vindicator bombers attacking the Japanese cruiser *Mikuma*.

As Fleming made his bombing attack,

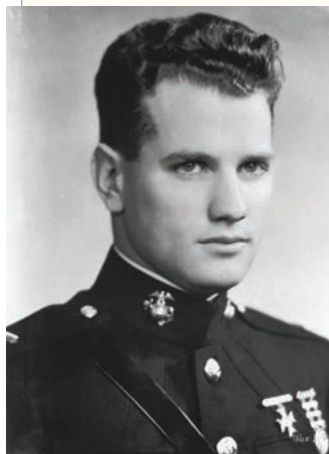
**As Fleming made his bombing attack, anti-aircraft fire hit his Vindicator and set it afire. He continued his bomb run, however, dropping his 500-pound bomb at 500 feet.**

**The Japanese cruiser *Mikuma* after suffering attacks by aircraft from USS *Enterprise* and USS *Hornet* on June 6, 1942. (USN photo)**





# Another Marine Hero on Midway



1stLt George H. Cannon

USMC

**Below right: A memorial was constructed on Sand Island in the Midway Islands to honor 1stLt Cannon who received a posthumous Medal of Honor for his heroic actions on the evening of Dec. 7, 1941.**

**T**he island of Midway was also the site of another Marine's act of heroism. Months before the Battle of Midway, on Dec. 7, 1941, First Lieutenant George H. Cannon was in command of Battery H, Sixth Defense Battalion, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific on the island. After the early morning attack on Pearl Harbor that fateful Sunday, Midway's shore batteries exchanged fire with two Japanese destroyers

beginning at approximately 9:30 p.m. These destroyers had departed the formation of Japanese ships returning to Japan after attacking Oahu; their mission was to shell Midway.

Shellfire from one or both of the destroyers hit Cannon's command post, mortally wounding him and fracturing his pelvis and both legs. Although badly wounded, he protested evacuation from his command post until all other wounded Marines were evacuated. He also reorganized his command post until, as his Medal of Honor citation reads, he was "forcibly" removed from it.

Cannon died in the naval air station's dispensary that evening from blood loss. He subsequently was awarded the Medal of Honor for "distinguished conduct in the line of his profession, extraordinary courage, and disregard for his condition" during the attack. He was the only Marine to receive the Medal of Honor for actions on Dec. 7 and the first Marine to receive the award during World War II.

Col Charles A. Jones, USMCR (Ret)



COURTESY OF BARRY CHRISTENSON

antiaircraft fire hit his Vindicator and set it afire. He continued his bomb run, however, dropping his 500-pound bomb at 500 feet. Unfortunately, it missed *Mikuma*, and he crashed into the ocean in flames. He perished in the Pacific along with his rear-seat gunner, Private First Class George Toms.

A photograph of the stricken ship appears to show wreckage of Fleming's Vindicator atop the turret second from the stern of *Mikuma*, but the strongest evidence leads to a conclusion that Fleming's aircraft crashed into the ocean, not into the ship itself. In fact, his Medal of Honor citation states that his aircraft scored a "near-miss on the stern of his target, then crashed to the sea in flames."

*Mikuma* sank on June 6 after an attack by aircraft from USS *Enterprise* (CV-6) and USS *Hornet* (CV-8).

## The Dauntless

Fleming and his fellow aviators were not flying "state of the art" aircraft. In that regard, what is interesting is the dark humor found in the June 7, 1942, report about the Battle of Midway submitted by the commanding officer of Marine Aircraft Group 22. He wrote that the Dauntless, while "far superior" to the Vindicator, was "deficient in performance to such a degree as to indicate that their only practical usefulness is for training purposes." He slammed the Vindicators, which were the Navy's first monoplane dive bombers: "The SB2U-3 type airplane is inferior in all phases of performance." The Vindicators he had before the battle and those remaining after it were "in such deplorable condition as regards fabric covering because of long exposure to rain and sun[,] and the performance of

the power plant has been so unsatisfactory as to render them valueless except for training or use as 'drones.' "

## Medal of Honor

After Fleming and Toms received posthumous Purple Hearts, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Fleming's Medal of Honor citation on, of all days, the Marine Corps Birthday—Nov. 10, 1942. Upon learning from Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox that the Fleming family was in Washington, D.C., the President agreed to host the Flemings at the White House so he could present the Medal of Honor to Fleming's mother with his brothers in attendance: Ward Fleming was a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps, and James Fleming was a college student. Also present were the Commandant of the Marine Corps,



**As Fleming made his bombing attack, antiaircraft fire hit his Vindicator and set it afire. He continued his bomb run, however, dropping his 500-pound bomb at 500 feet.**

Lieutenant General Thomas Holcomb; Director of the Division of Marine Corps Aviation, Major General R.J. Mitchell; and Fleming's squadron commander, Lieutenant Colonel R.L. Kimes.

### Making History

With the President's presentation of the Medal of Honor, Fleming achieved the distinction of receiving the only Medal of Honor awarded for the Battle of Midway in 1942. His was also the first Medal of Honor *presented* to a Marine Corps aviator during World War II (the first *actions* resulting in a Medal of Honor for a Marine Corps aviator were those of Captain Henry Elrod on Wake Island in December 1941). While many today are not aware of Fleming's heroism, his name is inscribed on the Courts of the Missing at Punchbowl on Oahu; there is an In Memory Marker at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minn., marking an empty grave; and he is included on the wall at the National Naval Aviation Museum at Pensacola, Fla., honoring naval aviation personnel who have received the Medal of Honor. In addition, the destroyer escort USS *Fleming* (DE-32) was named after the Marine aviator—the ship would later see action off Okinawa in 1945. She was decommissioned in 1945 and sold in 1948.

*Author's note: I hope that this article will encourage the Marine Corps to erect a memorial to Fleming on Midway in order to prevent a very brave Marine aviator from suffering an undeserved fate—being overlooked or forgotten.*

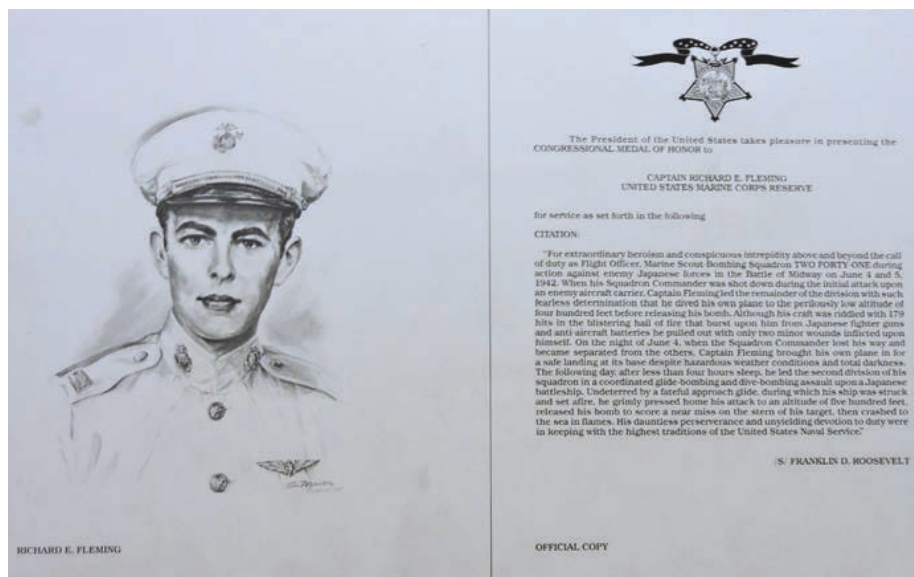
*Author's bio: Col Charles A. Jones USMCR (Ret) served as a judge advocate in the Marine Corps and Marine Corps Reserve for 30 years. His book "Pearl Harbor's Hidden Heroes," is a detailed account of the Navy and Marine Corps officers and men receiving Medals of Honor for actions in the Hawaiian Islands during World War II. He lives in Greensboro, N.C.*



**Above: Capt Fleming is memorialized by an inscription at the Honolulu Memorial at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (the Punchbowl), Honolulu, Hawaii. The gilded lettering and gilded star indicate that he is a Medal of Honor recipient.**

**Right: The marker designating Fleming's empty grave at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minn.**

**Below: Capt Fleming's heroics are honored with a plaque at the National Naval Aviation Museum, Pensacola, Fla.**





# Passing the Word

Compiled by Kyle Watts

## Honor Flight Network Offers Trips to D.C. for Hawaii Veterans

Honor Flight Network will now offer flights from Honolulu to Washington, D.C., with Hawaii-based veterans aboard. An initial partnership with Alaska Airlines will make the visits to our Nation's Capital possible for deserving Hawaii-based veterans so they may experience the memorials that honor their service and sacrifice. The first trip will occur during the week of Veterans Day with several more trips planned for 2023 and beyond.

Since 2005, Honor Flight Network has given more than 250,000 veterans across the country the profound experience of visiting our nation's war memorials. Veterans or families of veterans interested in applying for a trip can visit [www.honorflight.org](http://www.honorflight.org).

"The Honor Flight program fosters deep connections among veterans through the shared bond of serving our country and the exhilarating experience of visiting

the national memorials," said Meredith Rosenbeck, Honor Flight Network's Chief Executive Officer. "In partnering with Alaska Airlines, we are able to bring Hawaii-based veterans to the memorials for the first time so they, too, can share in the Honor Flight experience."

For veterans who do not live on Oahu, Honor Flight Network will help transport them from the neighboring islands to Honolulu before flying them to Washington, D.C.

"Alaska Airlines is a proud supporter of all past and present members of the military," said Tim Thompson, Alaska Airlines' External Affairs Manager. "Through our continued partnership with the Honor Flight Network, we'll have the privilege of flying these brave men and women from Hawaii to Washington to honor the sacrifices they have made for our country."

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, Honor Flight Network coordinates the travel of approximately 26,000 veterans

each year from around the country with the help of volunteers and generous partners. All honored veterans travel at no cost to them.

The Honor Flight Network is currently made up of more than 130 hubs throughout the country. In addition to World War II veterans, the organization transports veterans who served in the Korean War, Vietnam War, intermediary operations, and, in special cases of terminal illness or injury, veterans from more recent service eras. For more information, visit [honorflight.org](http://honorflight.org).

Honor Flight Network

## North Carolina Hiking Expeditions Offer Challenges for Veterans

North Carolina's Pisgah National Forest is home to the first piece of land purchased under the Weeks Act of 1911, leading to the creation of national forests in the eastern United States. In the fall of 2022, Pisgah was the site where veterans from across the country had a chance to



TSgt JOHN WINN, USAF

The Honor Guard, composed of representatives from all military branches, render a farewell salute to veterans of World War II as they begin to board their aircraft at Boise Airport, Aug. 31, 2015. The 28 veterans spent several days touring memorials and sites in the nation's capital to honor their service and sacrifices as part of the Honor Flight of Idaho program.



conquer a challenging 21-mile wilderness hiking expedition along the scenic Art Loeb Trail.

No Barriers Warriors, an offshoot of the veterans' organization No Barriers USA, organized the expeditions on four separate dates. No Barriers Warriors helps veterans redefine their identity, purpose, and community as they face past and present challenges. Their programs serve as an opportunity for growth and a catalyst for change as veterans work to overcome physical and emotional boundaries, foster camaraderie, push through adversity, and step up to serve others.

Over the years, these expeditions have changed thousands of lives. Each one uses the No Barriers philosophy to craft experiences that challenge veterans to think critically about where they are in life, where they want to be, and how to get there. To participate, a veteran must have a VA service-connected disability. Each of the four expeditions in Pisgah National Forest accommodated up to 12 veterans at no cost to the former servicemembers.

The expeditions were physically and emotionally challenging. Carrying a backpack that weighed nearly 30 pounds and includes necessities such as a sleeping bag and tent, food, and personal items, the veterans climbed a total of about 7,000 feet. The Art Loeb Trail passed major peaks including Tennent Mountain (6,040 feet) and Black Balsam Knob (6,214 feet). The journey ended when the hikers reached the summit of Black Balsam.

Army veteran Marlene Champagne, who runs No Barriers Warriors with her husband, Peter Champagne, also an Army veteran, said most of the veterans on the expeditions have PTSD while others may be at risk for suicide or have depression.

"We incorporate real-life elements along the way, especially around the campfire at the end of the day where the veterans can open up to each other about the issues they're struggling with because they have that common bond," Marlene said. "It's really a healing process for them. They're establishing what we call a rope team, where they know they've got someone they can reach out to when they're struggling with these issues."

At the end of the expedition, "We had a celebratory dinner," she added. "We showed the veterans a great time, with good food and camaraderie. It was a wonderful opportunity for them to meet the sponsors who paid for them to have this experience."

Don Timmons, a 76-year-old Vietnam veteran, completed the expedition last year. He called it a "milestone event" in his life and encourages others to meet the challenge.



CPL GRACE L. WALADKEWICS, USMC

**Sgt Dakota Meyer, Marine Corps veteran and Medal of Honor recipient, speaks to a group of Marines during a Hiring Our Heroes career and transition class at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., March 20, 2015. Hiring Our Heroes is hosted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation and is a nationwide initiative to help veterans find meaningful employment in public, private and nonprofit sectors.**

"That was my first hiking experience," he said. "To do it with other veterans made it even more special. The three-day, two-night hike was physically and emotionally challenging. It was something I am very proud to have completed, especially at 75 years old. I am very thankful to the No Barriers organization for providing this outstanding opportunity for me and other veterans across the country."

Before embarking on the journey, participants must complete the first phase of the program which includes participating in weekly online video sessions for a month. Veterans learn about the No Barriers' seven life elements: vision, rope teams, reach, pioneer, alchemy, summits, and elevate.

For more information, veterans can contact Marlene Champagne, the No Barriers Warriors' tri-state development manager, at [marlene@nobarriersusa.org](mailto:marlene@nobarriersusa.org) or 828-782-8322.

Mike Richman, VA News

### **SandboxAQ Teams Up With Hiring Our Heroes**

SandboxAQ, an enterprise SaaS company delivering artificial intelligence (AI) and Quantum technology (AQ), announced a partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes (HOH), an organization that connects the military community with American businesses to create economic opportunity and a strong and diversified workforce.

Through HOH, SandboxAQ is tapping into a growing pool of talented and ded-

icated workers looking to apply their advanced degrees and military experience in fields such as cryptography, AI, advanced mathematics, program management, natural and applied sciences, and other disciplines to develop AQ solutions that solve some of the world's toughest challenges.

"The quantum technology ecosystem is currently experiencing a dramatic shortage of the highly skilled talent it needs to sustain its rapid growth. This creates incredible opportunities for military community members to get involved with



pioneering companies using this technology to create groundbreaking products," said Suzannah Radack, the vice president of people operations at SandboxAQ. "We believe the military community has a lot to offer the quantum industry, and together with Hiring Our Heroes, we hope to give them a bright new career path in this exciting field."

For more than a decade, HOH has used hiring events, digital programs, and internships to cultivate a rich pipeline of military talent ready for the American business community. Through these initiatives, more than 617,000 veterans and military spouses have found employment. For more information on this partnership, visit <https://www.sandboxaq.com>.

SandboxAQ Press



# In Memoriam

Compiled by Nancy S. Lichtman

**Maj John C. Ballantyne**, 87, of Ringold, Ga. After earning a bachelor's degree from the University of Wooster, he was commissioned and served for 17 years on active duty and in the Marine Corps Reserve. He also had a career in human relations with General Motors.

**Raymond W. Blake**, 92, of Berkely Springs, W.Va. He enlisted in November 1951 and served in the Korean War. He later was assigned to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

**SgtMaj John T. Collier**, 102, of Beaufort, S.C. He was a veteran of WW II who saw action on Guadalcanal and during the Battle of Cape Gloucester. He was captured by the Japanese and later escaped a POW camp in the Philippines on a raft he constructed. After returning to the U.S., he was a DI at Parris Island.

During the Korean War he participated in the Inchon landing and served during the fighting at the Chosin Reservoir.

He retired in 1964. His awards include the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. His daughter said that only a few days before his death, he asked his caregivers to sing the National Anthem for him.

**Sgt Hedwig "Hedy" Dassinger**, 97, in Surprise, Ariz. She enlisted during WW II after her high school graduation. She did clerical work and was assigned to a typing pool in Washington, D.C. In her later years, she did volunteer work at a VA hospital in Arizona.

**Donald D. De Cleene**, 86, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted in 1954 and served until 1957. He later attended University of Wisconsin in Madison and earned a degree in business.

**David J. Dessart**, 74, of Green Bay, Wis. He served in the Marine Corps Reserve from 1967-1978.

**Milton "Mick" DeVillers**, 96, of Green Bay, Wis. A veteran of WW II, he served in the South Pacific, including in the Marianas and Marshall Islands. After the war, he worked as a carpenter and a millwright.

**Cpl Helen Dhein**, 86, of Sauk Rapids, Minn. She enlisted in 1953 and went to boot camp at Camp Lejeune. She was assigned to Henderson Hall in Washington, D.C., where she was a postal clerk and a security clearance clerk.

**MSgt Howard C. Dotson**, 84, of Grundy, Va. He served 20 years at a variety of duty stations including Camp Lejeune, N.C.; Iwakuni, Japan; and Washington, D.C. He was assigned to the III MAF in

Da Nang, Vietnam in 1967-1968. He also served as the communications chief for 3rd Bn, 10th Marines.

**Placido "Pat" J. Femino Sr.**, 97, in Woonsocket, R.I. He was a veteran of WW II who saw action on Iwo Jima.

**Larry E. Fitzpatrick**, 73, of Ravenna, Ohio. He enlisted after his 1967 graduation from high school. He later had a career in the steel industry.

**SSgt Carl R. Fox**, 90, of Lancaster, Pa. He was a veteran of the Korean War where he was assigned to 1st Recon Bn.

**Leo Geiser**, 90, of Trenton, Ohio. He was a Marine who served from 1952-1954. He later had a career in as an accountant.

**PFC Eugene Goodman**, 96, of Boynton Beach, Fla. He was a radioman with the 4thMarDiv in the Pacific during WW II.

**Cpl Jared N. Heine**, 32, of Zachary, La. He completed boot camp at MCRD Parris Island in 2008. He was an artillery field cannoner who later trained as an IED dog handler. He deployed to Afghanistan in 2011. His awards include the Purple Heart.

**Kenneth A. Heinecke**, 74, of Fond du Lac, Wis. He was assigned to 3rd Bn, 26th Marines and served a tour in Vietnam. His awards include two Purple Hearts.

**James E. Houk**, 97, of Garver Lake, Mich. He was a corpsman with 2ndMarDiv in the Pacific during WW II. His awards include the Purple Heart.

**LtCol Brandy James**, 80, of South Mills, N.C. She had a 22-year Marine Corps career and later worked for Cubic Applications, Inc.

**James W. Jepson**, 83, of Suamico, Wis. He enlisted after his 1956 high school graduation and served three years as an infantry Marine.

**Sgt Clifford J. Keeline**, 75, of Auburn, Wash. He was a gunner and crew chief with HMM-263 in Vietnam. He flew 520 combat missions.

**Frank Kelly**, 87, of Franklin, Ohio. He served in the Marine Corps before beginning a career in the ministry.

**LCpl John Manriquez Jr.**, 60, of Santa Fe, N.M. He enlisted after high school and served for several years.

**PFC Hobart Minton**, 90, in Bowling Green, Ky. He enlisted in 1951 and served for three years. He was a veteran of the Korean War.

**William "Bill" Montgomery**, 95, of Jacksonville, Fla. He was a veteran of WW II who fought in the Battle of Iwo Jima. He later had a career in the insurance business, retiring as a senior

vice president. He was a member of the MCA and a loyal *Leatherneck* reader.

**MSgt Sidney R. Morris**, 76, in Ann Arbor, Mich. He was a veteran of Operation Desert Storm.

**Daniel J. Murphy**, 74, of Green Bay, Wis. His two years in the Marine Corps included one tour in Vietnam.

**Christine L. Need**, 69, of Albany, N.Y. She enlisted during the Vietnam War. She later had a 40-year career as a paralegal.

**LtGen Stephen Olmstead**, 92, of Annandale, Va. He enlisted in 1948 and served as a rifleman with G/3/1 during the Korean War. He saw action during Operation Ripper and the Chosin Reservoir Campaign. After the war he attended OCS and was commissioned in 1951. During his decades-long career, he commanded at every level including serving as the CO, 9th Marines and the CG for MCB Camp Pendleton and MCRD Parris Island. After his 1989 retirement, he was active with the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, serving as the organization's chairman. He also was an advisor to the Marine Corps League and served as president of the Chosin Few.

**SgtMaj Arthur O. Petty Jr.**, 99, of Woodbury, Tenn. He grew up during the Depression and quit school in 8th grade. He joined the Civilian Conservation Corps as soon as he was old enough. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in March 1941 and served in the Pacific during WW II where he saw action on Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa. He was discharged in 1946 but was called back to active duty during the Korean War. His service included a tour in Chu Lai, Vietnam. He retired in 1969 and was active with the VFW.

**Lt Charles "Chuck" Robinson**, 87, of Orange County, Calif. He was commissioned after graduating from California State University and served for three years.

**Daniel D. Roegger**, 81, of Hamilton, Ohio. He was assigned to 2nd Recon Bn.

**Sgt Michael J. Ryan**, 81, of Albuquerque, N.M. He served in the Marine Corps Reserve and also had a career in newspaper advertising and publishing.

**LtCol Paul A.A. St. Amour**, 94, of Bedford, Mass. He enlisted in the Navy after high school and served two years. After he completed his undergraduate studies and law school, he was commissioned in the Marine Corps, serving for 18 years as a Judge Advocate. Duty stations



included Cherry Point, N.C., Japan, Korea and Vietnam. After his retirement, he continued to practice law in Bedford.

**Samuel Sandoval**, 98, in Shiprock, N.M. He was one of the Navajo Code Talkers during WW II. He enlisted in 1943 and completed boot camp at MCRD San Diego. He then spent the next five months at Camp Pendleton, training and learning the Navajo code. He deployed to the Pacific where he saw action on Bougainville, Guam, Peleliu and Okinawa. In 2001 he received a Silver Congressional Award. The documentary “Naz Bah Ei Bijei: Heart of a Warrior” features Sandoval’s role as a Code Talker.

**William E. “Willie” Schmidt Sr.**, 69, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted after his 1971 high school graduation.

**1stSgt Stephanie Servis**, 54, of Flagstaff, Ariz. During her 21 years on active duty, she was a DI and an MSG Marine. She also served at OCS. After her retirement, she was a DOD civilian at MCB Quantico.

**Mark Shields**, 85, in Chevy Chase, Md. He served for two years before beginning a long, successful career in politics where among other things, he was a well-known pundit for PBS news.

**Col Alexander “Al” Gordon Smith III**, 87, of Richland, N.C. He served 40

years after enlisting in 1951 and eventually being commissioned. His awards include the Bronze Star and the Navy Achievement Medal.

**Capt Robert B. Stark Jr.**, 84, of Boulder, Colo. He was commissioned in 1963 and served with 3rd Recon Bn in Vietnam. After leaving the Marine Corps, he had a career in business. He later served on the board of directors for the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

**Capt David J. Straus II**, 98, of San Antonio, Texas. He served in the Pacific during WW II and saw combat on Okinawa. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War and served as the XO of Co F, 5th Marines at an outpost called The Hook.

He had a successful career in business and was the third generation to head his family’s business, Straus-Frank Co. He was involved with the development of the San Antonio Riverwalk and was the founding member and chairman of the Riverwalk Commission.

**Clinton E. Tillotson**, 76, of Oakville, Conn. He served from 1963-1971. He was assigned to HMM-265, MAG-36, 1stMAW as a gunner aboard CH-46s during the Vietnam War. His awards include a Bronze Star.

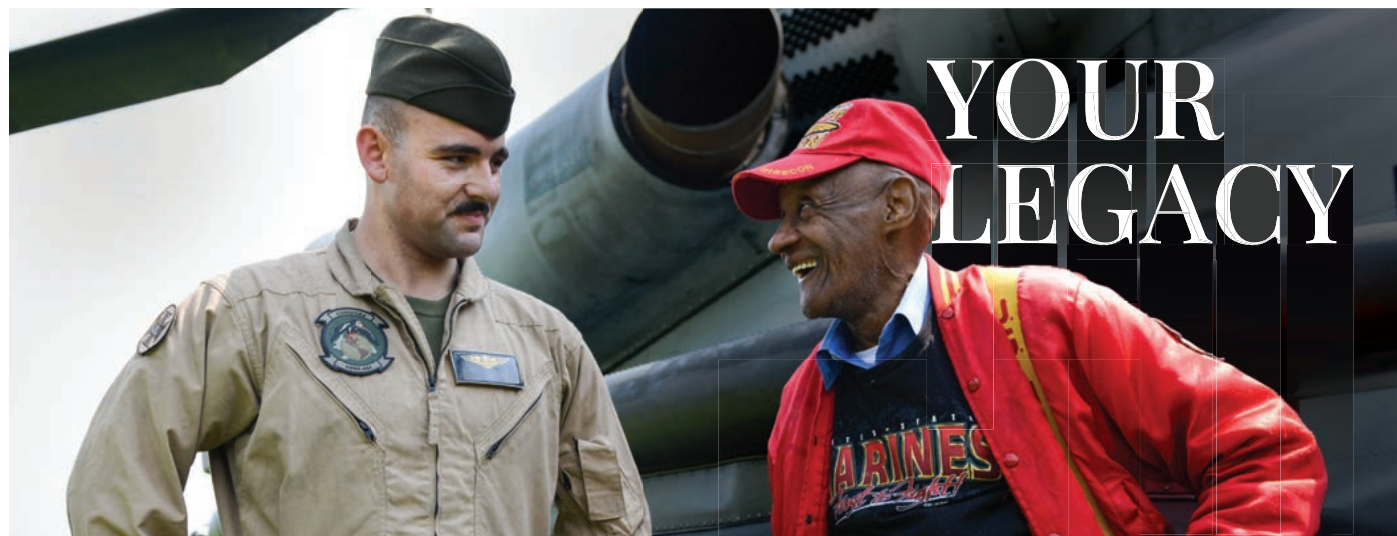
**BGen Richard F. “Dick” Vercauteren**,

77, of Wilmington, N.C. He was commissioned in 1967 after graduation from Providence College in Rhode Island. He served a tour in Vietnam as a platoon commander with 2/9. Other assignments included UN military observer and operations officer in Egypt, Israel, Syria and Lebanon.

He was also CO of Co F, MSG Bn and CG, 1st Marine Expeditionary Brigade. After his retirement, he worked for Booze Allen, and in 2020, he was elected chair of the board of directors for the Carolina Museum of the Marine | Al Gray Civic Institute.

**John J. Zenyuch**, 95, of Marion Heights, Pa. He enlisted in 1944 and served in the Pacific during WW II. He later served as an MSG Marine in London, Paris and Rome. He was a member of the VFW.

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).



There are many ways in which you can give to further the mission of the **Marine Corps Association Foundation** and make a difference to the professional development of Today’s Marines.

A gift of stocks or bonds is one way to provide a charitable donation while also receiving a tax benefit at the end of the year. If you have owned securities for more than a year and their value has increased, you can avoid capital gains taxes and receive a charitable deduction equal to the fair market value of the gift if you donate them to the Marine Corps Association Foundation and our programs for Marines.

To donate any marketable securities, please contact Michelle Collins at [m.collins@mca-marines.org](mailto:m.collins@mca-marines.org) for additional information or visit [mca-marines.org/legacy-gift-planning/options-for-giving](https://mca-marines.org/legacy-gift-planning/options-for-giving)



**SOUND OFF**  
[continued from page 8]

Colonel Scheller certainly understood that his actions would not go unnoticed and there would be consequences. Anyone who believes that publicly excoriating senior leaders will put an end to such tragedies needs to study a bit of history.

Sgt Paul Stenzel  
USMC, 1962-1966  
Machesney Park, Ill.

**Remembering an Old Friend  
From Boot Camp Days**

Mark Shields, a fellow Marine, recently passed away. Mark was a noted columnist and political commentator, and a longtime analyst for PBS. Mark and I were Marine boots at Parris Island in 1960. We were members of Platoon 189 under the care of our DI, Staff Sergeant J.J. Campbell.

Plt 189 was somewhat unusual in that it included a high percentage of college graduates. Mark was a Notre Dame graduate, and I had graduated from Brockport College and taught and coached football for a year before enlisting in the Marine Corps Reserve.

Even in 1960, Mark was passionate about politics and especially the young Democrat candidate, John F. Kennedy.



COURTESY OF CPL JOSEPH A. BELLANCA, USMCR

**Joe Bellanca, left, and fellow Marine, Mark Shields, pose for a photo after reuniting 60 years after they were in boot camp together.**

Mark promoted JFK whenever possible as many of us would be voting in a presidential election for the first time. We completed boot camp in December 1960 and moved on for infantry training at Camp Geiger.

I had careers in the business world and as a school administrator. I followed Mark's career as a columnist in our local

newspaper. Sixty years after boot camp in 2020, Mark was presenting a talk at a local college near our home. I was able to procure tickets and waited for Mark to arrive. As he approached the auditorium entrance, he observed me standing off to the side. He altered his course and approached me. After 60 years, Mark and I recognized each other and administered a big Marine hug. After his talk, I was able to join Mark at his table and we spent some time together talking about our Parris Island experience.

Marine Corps Recruit Training, in my opinion, is the most effective education system, that I have ever been part of. I benefited from my Marine Corps service in many ways. Completing the challenges presented by Parris Island has to be one of the highlights of any young man's life. It prepared me for the many challenges that I have encountered in my life.

Cpl Joseph A. Bellanca, USMCR  
1960 to 1966  
Rochester, N.Y.

**Somewhere Between  
Then and Valhalla**

Many moons have come to pass  
since I walked on desert sand.

Many moons passed while there I  
waited to return to the promise land.

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Eons it seems, a lifetime at least,  
yet only a moment ago,  
I walked with legends and giants and  
heroes, the greatest men I'd ever know.

Bonded by courage to serve common  
cause, our mission to protect  
our brothers,  
Each other's lives held in the  
highest regard, their existence forsaken  
all others,  
We fought as one, poetry in motion,  
yet tough as the earth's iron ore,  
We moved with such grace but were  
filled with such hate, beautiful  
man-gods of war.

Each warrior who fell took with him  
from this life a piece of the man to his  
left and his right,  
With no time mourn and unwilling to  
yield, through tears we continued  
the fight,  
Time and again our brothers gained  
wings till there was nothing left in  
our chest,  
It's true what they say that the good  
die young and God takes only the best.

We long for their friendship, to see  
them again, the ones who were lost in  
the fray,

Yet they are the blessed and we are the  
cursed, for we must continue each day,  
We must rise with each sun and  
lay with each moon, a constant battle  
and strife,  
We feel we're in limbo, we feel we're  
in waiting, trapped in purgatory life.

For then at our best, we were proud  
strong young men, mission before our  
well-being,  
And now we grow old, our bodies  
used up, unsure what we're hearing  
or seeing,  
But one day we'll regroup, and all take  
a post on the other side of the gate,  
We'll embrace long lost friends, our  
sins all erased, each given a brand-new  
clean slate.

Until that time comes, we'll split  
ourselves up, flesh here,  
mind wandering the past,  
The flags of our souls hanging wounded  
in low, forever set at half mast,  
Wherever we roam while here in this  
world, awaiting the great final gala,  
We'll be proud of our doings yet  
somber in spirit, somewhere between  
then and Valhalla.

Cpl Garvin Todd Elliot Reid  
Hot Springs, Ark.

## Dreams of an Old Marine

I always look forward to receiving my  
copy of *Leatherneck* and seeing what has  
changed, and a lot of things have changed  
in my 91 years.

I arrived at Parris Island in a plane full  
of reservists that had been called up in  
October 1950. We soon became platoon  
256. Half of us were from Florida, the  
other half from Nebraska. The date was  
Nov. 9, 1950, and since our birthday was  
the following day, Staff Sergeant Bill  
Delosh gave us some free time. We played  
football, state versus state.

It appears to me the greens are made  
of a lot more comfortable material today  
and look a lot sharper. The difference  
with camouflage fatigues, as compared  
to our greens, is now you can roll up the  
sleeves. We would have loved to have had  
short sleeve khaki shirts and no ties. The  
helmets weighed a ton. Now I understand  
the helmets are much lighter in weight  
with all kinds of equipment to aid in  
combat.

The M1 was a fabulous rifle, but today,  
the arms are so much better in spraying  
bullets. I remember being down in the  
grenade pit and I'm sure those have  
changed in the last 70 years. I see all the  
new vehicles that have been developed  
for our Marines today. In my time the

# Are You Ready?



**Mike & Kay Ross**  
Albert E. Shockey Detachment #960  
Kokomo, Indiana



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# MENU

## Thanksgiving Day Dinner

### 1958

*The Lord loves a grateful heart. He knows our needs before we ask and we are doubly blessed when we remember to say "Thank You, God". The celebration of the Feast of Thanksgiving is a truly wonderful American tradition. Let us remember to observe it from our hearts.*

*We extend to you and yours our best wishes for a happy, meaningful Thanksgiving*

Chaplains of the Brigade and Station



CELERY HEARTS		
SWEET MIXED PICKLES	RIPE & GREEN OLIVES	
ROAST YOUNG TOM TURKEY	BAKED VIRGINIA HAM	
GIBLET GRAVY	CRANBERRY SAUCE	CORNBREAD
PINEAPPLE SAUCE		
SNOWFLAKED POTATOES	GLAZED SWEET POTATOES	
CORN NIBLETS	FRESH GREEN PEAS	
TOSSED GREEN SALAD	PERFECTION SALAD	
WALDORF SALAD		
FRENCH DRESSING MAYONAISE		
PUMPKIN PIE with TOPPING	MINCEMEAT PIE	
FRUIT CAKE	ICE CREAM	
FRESH FRUIT	MIXED NUTS	
CIGARS	ASSORTED CANDY	
COFFEE	PUNCH	MILK

**Capt Ed McCourt feasted on a holiday meal with all the trimmings on Thanksgiving Day while serving at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii.**

Chance Vought F4U Corsair was the plane of the day. If those pilots flew any lower, we could have shaken hands, but they saved my life. The F9F and F2H were just coming on strong. Today's jets are totally different to say nothing of the armament they unload. I had the privilege of going back to Cherry Point 10 years ago. My wife was able to sit in a Harrier right next to the hanger I worked in.

At age 8 I had no idea what a Marine was until an uncle of the boy across the street came for a visit. He wore dress blues with a pair of gold wings on his coat that got my attention. About 20 years later I was standing inspection. I was face-to-face with a colonel. I asked permission to speak and asked him if he had a nephew named Gary. He answered, "Yes." I told him he was the reason I joined the Marines. We both had a good laugh.

If anyone reads this from Plt 256, MAG-24 or SMS-234, I sure would like to know if any of them are on this side of the sod.

Keep up the good work, *Leatherneck*. It gives an old Marine a lot of enjoyment.

SSgt Rex E. Walker, USMCR (Ret)  
Greenacres, Wash.

### Thanksgiving Menu, 1958

I thought you may want to show the new breed that we ate well on Thanksgiving Day back in the old days. I was stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, with the 1st Marine Brigade in 1957 and 1958.

Capt Ed "Machete Eddie" McCourt  
USMC (Ret)  
1952 to 1972  
Florence, Ariz.

### Future Generation Shows Respect

I was having breakfast with my wife, Jacqueline, in Middleboro, Mass., a few days ago. She mentioned that she remembers on Veterans Day in 2021, when we were having breakfast at the same restaurant, that a mother and her young son, Robert, were sitting at a table opposite our table. As they were getting ready to leave, Robert, approximately 9 years old, came to our table and stood in front of me. He gave me a military salute while staring at my red Marine cane with the lettering (USMC and Semper Fi) that was by my side.

Robert stated, "I want to thank you for

your services to our country." I gave this young boy my best Marine salute and thanked him and his mother for the honor and tribute. This lad is a good example of our future generations that will show respect and tributes to our veterans.

This hard-core Marine had some tears in his eyes from this boy's salute and tribute he bestowed upon me. To this day my wife and I will always cherish that boy's respect for veterans on that Veterans Day. It will always brighten our days.

Cpl John Messia Jr.  
USMCR, 1952-1954  
Brockton, Mass.

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



## Reunions

• **Force Recon Assn.**, Nov. 17-19, San Antonio. Contact Dave Jarvis, (760) 716-3713, jarvisda77@gmail.com, www.forcerecon.com.

• **Marine Corps Disbursing Assn.**, May 21-25, 2023, Louisville, Ky. Contact MGySgt Kevin Gascon, USMC (Ret), (760) 458-2655, usmcdisbursers@hotmail.com, www.usmcdisbursers.com.

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

• **2/9 (all eras)**, Nov. 8-12, Arlington, Va. Contact Danny Schuster, (978) 302-4126, twoninecoic@aol.com, www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org.

• **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, 2023, 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.

## Wanted

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

• Bill R. Sowders Sr., (260) 482-2872, wants **Recruit Graduation Books for Plt 1003 and Plt 2003** at Parris Island, Feb. 4, 1965.

## Mail Call

• John Prusa, (714) 476-3186, alumni.of.hmx.1@gmail.com, encourages all Marines and Sailors who were assigned to HMX-1 to connect with the squadron's alumni group. Formed in 2013, the group has 1,890 members. There are no dues to join.

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. 🐻

# THE HOLIDAY SEASON IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

KEEP THE MARINE SHOP IN MIND FOR YOUR HOLIDAY SHOPPING NEEDS.



# Saved Round

By Nancy S. Lichtman



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

WITH ONE EYE CLOSED AND MY HANDS TIED BEHIND MY BACK—Two Marines wearing blindfolds demonstrate their prowess in assembling a Lewis machine gun, Nov. 11, 1918, at the Savage Arms Corporation plant, Utica, N.Y., where the guns were manufactured. The air-cooled Lewis gun was a light machine gun designed in 1911 by Army Major Isaac Newton Lewis. It featured a large hollow metal cooling shroud, which housed the barrel. The top-mounted pan magazine gave the weapon a lower profile, allowing machine gunners to fire from the prone position (right). MAJ Lewis designed the machine gun so that only one tool was required for disassembly—the pointed bullet of a service cartridge.

Nicknamed the “Belgian Rattlesnake” by the Germans during World War I, the Lewis could fire up to 750 pounds per minute.

Although Marines had trained with and

loved the Lewis, they did not use it in combat during World War I. The Army had opted against purchasing Lewis guns, likely due to a dispute between MAJ Lewis and the head of Army ordnance. Upon their arrival in France, Marines, who were part of the Army-led American Expeditionary Forces, were issued the French-made Chauchat machine gun.

The Lewis, however, was an ideal choice to mount to aircraft, and American aviation units used the machine gun with the cooling shroud removed. In addition, militaries from Belgium, Canada and Great Britain used the Lewis machine gun for many decades.

To read more about the Lewis machine gun, see “Potato Digger, Belgian Rattlesnakes and Machine-Gun Heroism at Guadalcanal,” in the March 2010 issue of *Leatherneck*. 🦖



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES



WWW.LEJEUNECLAIMS.COM

# THE CAMP LEJEUNE JUSTICE ACT

BECAME LAW ON AUGUST 11, 2022

From 1953 to 1987, Marines, Sailors, Coast Guard personnel, government employees, civil contractors and their families who lived and worked on Camp Lejeune and Marine Corps Air Station New River were exposed to contaminated water.

Compensation is available for those who were assigned to the area. This includes those of a living or deceased family member.

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# CAMP LEJEUNE JUSTICE ACT OF 2022



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From 1953 to 1987 Marines, members of the Navy, Coast Guard, Government Staff, and families who lived at Camp Lejeune were exposed to harmful chemicals in their water and ground water.

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& Many More

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