

AUGUST 2017

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

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Of the Marine Corps
RONALD L. GREEN:
Innovation is Key
To Corps' Future





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David J. Fitzgerald, 81, Leaves a Lasting Legacy Gift to the
MARINE CORPS ASSOCIATION FOUNDATION

In Memoriam

Corporal David J. Fitzgerald of Queensbury, NY, bequeathed a generous gift to ensure our Marines benefit from the Marine Corps Association Foundation's many educational programs for years to come. Corporal Fitzgerald enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1950 and served as a machine gunner during the Korean War. He was severely wounded by shrapnel during an attack on his platoon's position and received the Purple Heart. Corporal Fitzgerald later became a businessman in the Lake George, NY area, operating various tourist accommodations and taverns. A dedicated student of military history, he wrote a novel, "Toyland" and a collection of short stories under the title "Warwork." The Marine Corps Association Foundation is grateful for people like Corporal Fitzgerald who continue to help their fellow Marines even after they have moved on to guard the streets of Heaven.



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COVER: The 18th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major Ronald L. Green, USMC, speaks to the Marines of “Charlie” Co., at The Basic School, Quantico, Va., on Sept. 23, 2015. Photo by Sgt Melissa Marnell, 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.

Letter of the Month

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

I grew up in a small cotton mill town in central North Carolina. The mill employed almost all the adults in town, and in 1951, the average wage was 85 cents an hour. I knew the only way to college was by way of the military and the GI Bill.

Since my dad and all my uncles were Navy veterans of World War II, naturally I headed to the Navy recruiter's office.

After spending most of the day taking tests and being interviewed, the recruiter said, "Congratulations, you are all set." He told me to come back in three weeks and I'd be on my way to Great Lakes, Ill. The recruiter said that was the soonest he could get me out of there. I had already told all my friends goodbye, had a going away party and kissed my girlfriend goodbye.

I looked up and standing in the doorway was a tall man wearing a khaki shirt and blue trousers with a red stripe down his trousers—a Marine recruiter. He asked, "How soon do you want to leave?" I told him I couldn't go back home and wait three weeks; I would be the laughing stock of the entire town. He picked up my papers from the Navy recruiter's desk and said, "Come with me, lad."

He took me to supper and checked me into the YMCA. The next morning I was on a Trailways bus to Parris Island, S.C. My higher power was looking after me and I say thanks every night.

I had two trips to Vieques, Puerto Rico, a Med cruise with 3/8 and a tour in Korea where I earned a combat action ribbon with two stars.

When discharged, I enrolled at Florida State University, worked 30 years in law enforcement and retired from the Leon County, Fla., sheriff's department.

Norman Bradshaw
USMC, 1951-54
Tallahassee, Fla.

Readers Relate to "The New Guy"

I read the article "The New Guy" [May issue], and was very moved by it. At the end when the name of the new guy was revealed, I was taken completely by surprise. You see, Esau Whitehead was my bunkmate for a while at Marine Barracks, Naval Air Station Jacksonville, Fla.

We played on the basketball and softball teams together. He was an excellent athlete. He had an infectious laugh to go along with an electric smile. And could he sing. Doo-wop was his favorite.

We worked the main gate and security area and as back-watches at the brig. We were even assigned to burial details, a job neither enjoyed. We were very good friends, the black kid from Brooklyn and this little white kid from Philly. I have been thinking of him all day today and decided to thank you for a fine tribute. He is well-worth remembering.

I also served in country in 1967-68 but didn't know he was there at the same time. Welcome home, Esau.

Michael P. Marco Jr.
Port Saint Lucie, Fla.

I really enjoyed Michael P. Walsh's story, "The New Guy," that appeared in the May issue. I am part of the management of the USMC Vietnam Tankers Association. We have a history project where we encourage our membership to write their own personal accounts of their time in country as well as any time in their lives that might

be of interest to the membership. We publish a quarterly magazine that features (mostly) our own stories ... the story that Michael wrote would fit nicely in our archives.

Sgt John Wear
USMC, 1966-69
Elbert, Colo.

• Michael Walsh's "The New Guy" struck a chord with many of our readers, and we received numerous emails and calls from Marines who related stories of their own "new guys." Mr. Walsh graciously gave the USMC Tanker Association permission to reprint the article. He also provided an update, which we have printed below, to his own quest to ensure the story of Esau Whitehead was told to his family.—Editor

"The New Guy" has been forwarded to a man who seems to be a, younger cousin—one of a family of 10 whose older members were close with Esau Whitehead Jr.

Thank you for your assistance; I think now, the story can be changed to "His family does know."

Michael P. Walsh

Those Who Surpassed the 50-Mile Challenge

In your April issue [We—the Marines], Sara Bock wrote about the "2dMarDiv Leathernecks Take On 50-Mile Challenge." I'd like to inform her that on July 13, 1957, our colonel informed the First Reconnaissance Battalion we were going to set a mark that would not be broken. We began a 175-mile foot march from Death Valley, the lowest point in the "lower 48" states, to Mount Whitney, the highest point.

When we got to our final destination, we made a cameo appearance on the TV program "Have Gun—Will Travel." I was a machine gunner in Weapons Platoon, Co A.

In rebuttal to Sergeant Anthony Mesa, we did the longest hike. If any of you old salts that were there in that outfit would like to get in touch, please contact me at Lelo96003@yahoo.com.

Adolpho "Marty" Martinez
USMC, 1955-60
Redding, Calif.

I read the article about the 2dMarDiv taking a 50-mile challenge in the April

Letters Home

Do you have a letter that you treasure written by your special Marine? One you received from boot camp, OCS, or a faraway land? Is it something informative, heartfelt, or funny? If you would like to share it with our readers, we might feature it in an upcoming issue of *Leatherneck*.

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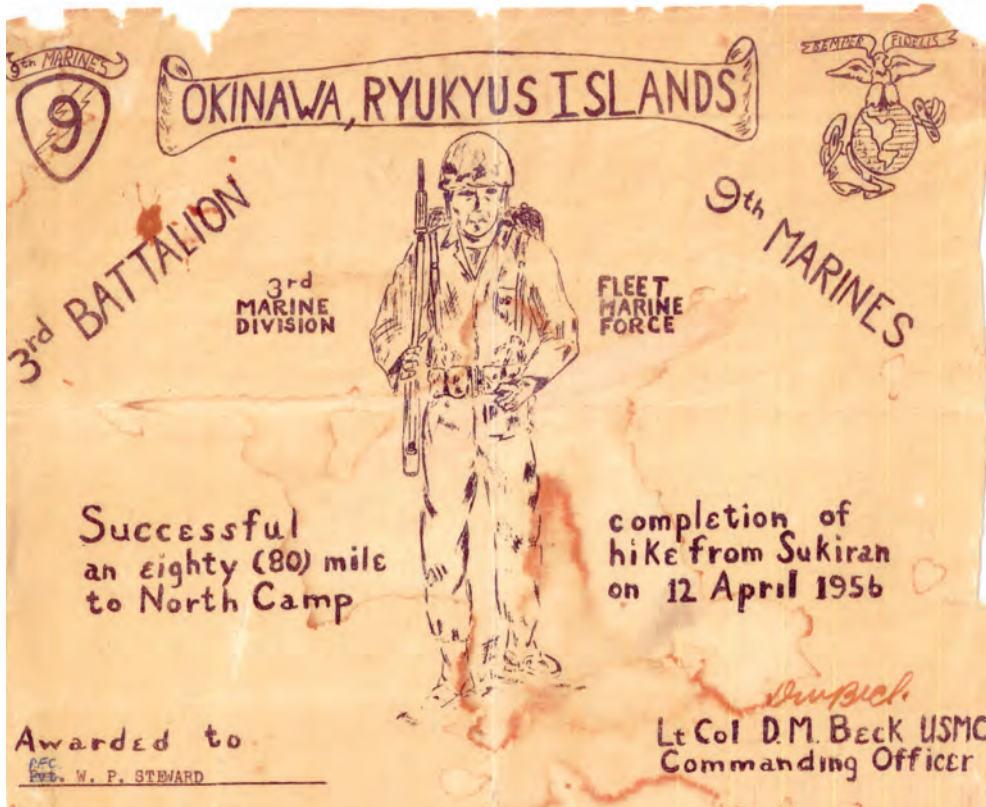
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A hike certificate was issued to PFC W.P. Steward in Sukiran, Okinawa, April 12, 1956. (Courtesy of Sgt Wilbert P. Steward, USMC)

Leatherneck. I salute those Marines of the 2dDiv; 50 miles is a long hike.

I was a member of the machine-gun platoon, Weapons Co, 3d Bn, 9th Marines in 1956. I'm enclosing a battalion certificate issued to me on April 12, 1956, by Lieutenant Colonel Beck, the battalion's commanding officer. We completed an 80-mile hike in three days.

I would like to salute the men of 3/9 who completed this hike 61 years ago.

Sgt Wilbert P. Steward, USMC
Kingwood, Texas

I just finished reading the short article "2dMarDiv Leathernecks Take On 50-Mile Challenge," in the April issue. Very interesting and commendable that so many could hike 50 miles in only three days. But on Okinawa in 1971, my company, G/2/9, completed a 50-mile hike, fully combat loaded, in slightly less than 24 hours. I would be happy to learn if any other company has accomplished the same feat.

LtCol Bob Kirkpatrick, USMC (Ret)
Charlottesville, Va.

Headline Was a Linguistic Pitfall

I am writing in relation to the title of the article that appeared in the April edition of *Leatherneck* magazine. The article was entitled "Safe Havens: Religious Organizations Encourage, Promote Marines' Spiritual Fitness." Frankly, I am very surprised that people like you—folks

with, presumably, a great deal of writing and editing experience—would begin an article with the two words with which you started this one.

Although you are by no means the only ones these days whom I've witnessed make this mistake, it seems to me that people like you, who are usually so wary and meticulous about avoiding linguistic pitfalls, would have been among the first to avoid this one. I say that using "safe" as an adjective to describe the noun "havens" is a linguistic pitfall because "havens," by definition, are places of safety. Thus, to say that havens are safe is a blatant redundancy.

You certainly didn't commit an earth-shaking error by adding a word to the article's title that was completely unnecessary. Nevertheless, by falling prey to allowing such an ubiquitous cliché to creep into your writing, you begin a downward slide into the ranks of all those in our country today who unthinkingly utter such overused, worn out, and thoughtless phrases like, "have a nice day" (or just "have a good one"), "in harm's way," "at the end of the day," and "that's awesome." By starting that slide you begin to cheapen the language of such people as Shakespeare, Milton, Blake, Hardy, Yeats, Orwell, Thoreau, and Emerson, just to name a few from the vast pantheon of great writers who came before us.

Again, calling havens safe is relatively

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a minor problem. For the most part I think you do a superlative job of publishing *Leatherneck*, and I look forward with great anticipation to receiving my copy. When it arrives I always read it from cover to cover and enjoy it immensely.

I truly hope you will take my comments about the article's title in the spirit in which they are given. *Leatherneck* has always been a top-notch publication, but I

think you folks always need to be on your guard against redundancies and clichés slipping into it while you're looking the other way.

Carl Withey
USMC, 1966-68
Elbridge, N.Y.

• *Thank you for pointing out our error. We always appreciate it when our readers provide constructive criticism, especially when they mention Shakespeare, Yeats and Thoreau!—Editor*

Thanks for Articles

We are very thankful to see the features "Safe Havens" [April issue] and "Capodanno Honored at Vietnam Memorial Mass" [May issue] in *Corps Connections*.

I recall from boot camp visiting the chapel on Sunday morning to worship and have a little quiet time. Thanks so much for a terrific publication that keeps us current with our beloved Marine Corps.

LCpl Gary W. Hamilton
Fort Myers, Fla.

Cover Observation

Marine James Wright, "Ivy League Marine Takes the Lead Shaping Opportunities for Veterans," [April issue] graduated in 1957. How the heck did he get

his photo in our beloved *Leatherneck* (our Bible) with a tilted cover and grin?

I'm sure thousands of my brothers are just as upset as I am.

This article on him was outstanding!
Cpl Robert J. Fudjinski
USMC, 1956-58
Vero Beach, Fla.

LtGen Walt Was No Ordinary Marine

Thank you for featuring an article about Lieutenant General Lewis W. Walt in your April issue of *Leatherneck*, a Marine most of us who served under his command in Vietnam revered.

In the spring of 1965, while in Chu Lai, I wrote Gen Walt a letter requesting that if I made it out of Vietnam alive, I would like to go back to Honolulu where my wife lived. Days and months went by, and I had forgotten about my letter to Gen Walt.

Then one day, a month or so before my tour was to end, a Marine private came up to me in a jeep and asked me if I was Sergeant Salman, to which I replied, "Yes." He then handed me an envelope, and said, "This is from the Commanding General."

I opened the envelope which said "Original Orders" and ordered me to report to Marine Barracks Pearl Harbor. It was signed L.W. Walt, Major General, U.S.

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Marine Corps, Commanding General.

My last days in the Marine Corps on active duty were spent as assistant warden at the U.S. Naval Brig Pearl Harbor, a spit and polish duty station that I was honored to serve in.

Most official documents in the Marine Corps are signed by lower-ranking officers but this one was signed by Gen Walt. It sits proudly framed in my office as it has for over 40 years.

I will never forget Gen Walt's kindness. One year after I received my honorable discharge, my oldest daughter was born in Honolulu.

Sgt Terry Salman
USMC, 1962-68
Vancouver, Canada

I just received the April issue and immediately read the article about the "Three Star Grunt." It was a very good article as far as it went, but for a lot of us Marines who knew him well and served many years with him will say it left out a lot. Let me tell you just a little.


I met this great Marine in April 1948. I had just been transferred from 12th Service Battalion in Tsingtao, China, to 1st Provisional Marine Brigade on Guam and was assigned to 1st Provisional Combat Service Group as a repair shop machinist.


One Sunday I was summoned to the auto repair shop and asked to do some work on a Marine officer's car; he would pay me \$2. I had no idea who this officer was but could see he was quite senior. During the time I worked to fabricate four bushings to repair his car, he could see I was not happy for having been transferred from China to Guam.

After I finished with the repairs, I was told by another Marine that Lieutenant Colonel Walt wanted to know who I was. That is when I learned that he was on the General Staff of 1st Marine Brigade as the G-4. I was surprised that he had been such an easy person to talk with. I was really surprised when the next month LtCol Walt promoted me to sergeant.

At that time he said, "I had much rather see what a Marine can do with his head and hands than what he can do with paper and pencil." I came to know this officer very well over the ensuing years as our paths crossed many times. He always had a few minutes to stop and renew acquaintances, and he was ready to answer our questions and offer good advice.

The last time I saw him was in 1970 just before he retired as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. I was stationed at Marine Corps Supply [continued on page 62]


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In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock



LCPL JOSHUA MCALPINE, USMC

Col Christian Cabaniss, right, the commanding officer of Team 40, Task Force Al-Taqaddum, talks with U.S. Army LtGen Stephen J. Townsend, Commanding General, CJTF–OIR about joint training between U.S., Australian, British and Iraqi forces in Iraq, March 1.

AL TAQADDUM, IRAQ **Marines, Joint Partners**

Continue to Advise, Assist Iraqis

U.S. Marines, Sailors, soldiers and airmen with Task Force Al-Taqaddum (TFTQ) operate under one common mission—advising and assisting the Iraqi security forces (ISF) of the Anbar Operations Command.

“Even though we are not from the same unit and we don’t have history together, we are going to come together with a common mission and work on it to the best of our ability because others are depending on us,” said Colonel Christian Cabaniss, the commanding officer of TFTQ.

Each branch plays its part in the mission of Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve. And in an attempt to live up to the reputations of those who came before them, the Marines from I and

II Marine Expeditionary Forces currently serving in Iraq are leaving their footprints in the rich history of the Corps.

“The reputation that the Marine Corps has today—today’s Marines did not earn,” said Cabaniss. “It was built by those generations of Marines who won the great battles of our Corps’ history. We are capable of great things because we stand upon the shoulders of giants.”

While serving as the security force of TFTQ, the Marines of “Lima” Company, Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, attached to Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force–Crisis Response-Central Command, were responsible for providing security and manning the quick reaction force. More importantly, these individuals aided the advise and assist mission as instructors while training with the ISF.

During the period of time in which 3/7 Marines supported TFTQ, they improved range facilities to ensure more effective training alongside coalition forces.

They constructed a live rocket battle drill range, where Marines and other military personnel now have the capability to employ rockets, while previously they were only able to fire the AT4, an 84 mm unguided, portable, single-shot recoilless smoothbore weapon. In addition, a live hand-fragmentation grenade range was completed, which provides more high-explosive training to the ISF.

“It was good to see the young team leaders and squad leaders really start to understand how introduction of a high explosive into a gunfight affects you or the enemy,” said Gunnery Sergeant Phillip Blackwell, the Lima Co gunnery sergeant. “If you do it and leverage it the correct

way, you see what it can do for the higher headquarters and their perspective of the battlefield.”

As the Marines of Lima Co returned to the U.S. this spring, the Marines of Company A, First Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, assumed the tasks of their counterparts.

Known as “Animal” Company, 1/7, its Marines prepared to take on battalion-level training, whereas Lima Co focused on squad- and platoon-level tactics with the ISF.

Mobile training teams with Task Group Taji, alongside servicemembers with TFTQ, provide training to the ISF through various periods of instruction. A typical two-week course is broken into two portions: one week of urban training and one week of marksmanship. Other courses provided to the ISF include advanced marksmanship, combat lifesaver and explosive hazard awareness training.

“We have a whole menu of courses that the Iraqis can pick from and the courses come in all shapes and sizes,” said Major David Palacio, the Fires and Effects Coordinator of TFTQ. “It has been extremely beneficial to the Iraqis to be able to conduct this training here at what is basically their home base.”

When the personnel with TFTQ and Task Group Taji first inherited the training mission, there had only been one or two evolutions of training conducted. Since then, Palacio’s team has interacted with Task Group Taji regularly.

“We tie in everywhere that we can—in the gym, in the chow hall, the field and back here in the office,” said Palacio. “It’s a really good partnership that we have going.”

Today’s fight is unlike those in the past, where Marine battalions were spread across the area of operations. Now the Marines are largely confined to military establishments in support of the Iraqis; therefore, the peace in Iraq is ultimately in the hands of the Iraqi soldiers.

With more than 800 Iraqi soldiers trained, the personnel with TFTQ and Task Group Taji hope that in the future their partner forces will utilize the skills they have gained.

“It’s not just a matter of how many individuals that we can graduate,” said Palacio. “The measure of effectiveness will be how well the forces we train do in those final fights against Da’esh [Islamic State]—hopefully to finish off ISIS once and for all.”

Three Marines with 4th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, SPAMGTF–CR–CC, provided forward observer training to artillery and infantry officers with the 1st, 8th and 10th Iraqi Army Divisions.

The progressive two-week course consisted of classroom instruction, which transitioned to observation positions where they used computer simulators to practice adjusting fires and employing proper communications procedures. In the final days of the course, the Iraqi observers called in live 155 mm artillery fire missions supported by the 82d Field Artillery Regiment, 3d Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. By utilizing the Iraqi call for fire rather than the U.S. call for fire, the Iraqi soldiers became more proficient in their own techniques. A second course was conducted for Iraqi noncommissioned officers from the same Iraqi divisions.

The presence of SPMAGTF–CR–CC is seen across TFTQ and nearly a dozen Marines support daily operations in various sections in addition to those with A/1/7.

Palacio stated that without SPMAGTF–CR–CC’s support and help from U.S. soldiers and airmen, the task force could not function.

“We have Marines from California and North Carolina that are shoulder-to-shoulder with soldiers from New Zealand and Australia. If you point us all in the right direction, we will always try to do our best,” said Palacio.

Deploying U.S. Marines into the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility to conduct combined military training with the security forces of partner nations strengthens vital relationships in a strategically important region.

Cpl Shellie Hall, USMC

TWENTYNINE PALMS, CALIF. **Aircraft Refueling: MWSS Marines** **Keep Ground Secure During ITX**

The “Aces” of Marine Wing Support Squadron (MWSS) 373 provided security at a field aircraft refuel point (FARP) during Integrated Training Exercise (ITX) 3-17 at Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., May 20.

While MWSS-373 is part of the aviation combat element (ACE), its Marines often support missions on the ground, which can include providing security to aviation assets. During the training, MWSS-373 Marines traveled to the FARP site, dug fighting holes, disguised their vehicles and established defense positions to guard against potential enemy attacks during aircraft refueling operations.

“We want our Marines to provide organic, defensive support to our squadron,” said Second Lieutenant Tyler Cerrato, MWSS-373 security element commander during ITX 3-17. “It is key for ACE elements to have this training in case ground units are employed elsewhere.”

This enables an ACE and ground combat element (GCE) to overlap in certain duties and fulfills part of the MWSS-373 mission within the Third Marine Aircraft Wing: to provide essential aviation ground requirements to a designated fixed-wing component.

“This training allows our Marines to expand their skill set and build off what they learned during [recruit training and Marine Combat Training],” said Sergeant Pedro Henriquez, a motor vehicle operator with MWSS-373.



SGT DAVID BICKEL, USMC

Sgt Pedro Henriquez, a motor transport operator with MWSS-373, relays an enemy position via radio while defending a FARP during ITX 3-17 at MCGACC Twentynine Palms, Calif., May 17. More than 650 Marines and 27 aircraft from 3d MAW supported ITX 3-17.

Marines with 3d ANGLICO and Canadian soldiers from 2 RCR search for possible enemy targets to provide surface-to-surface and air-to-surface fire support during Exercise Maple Resolve in Wainwright, Alberta, May 26.



CPL GABRIELLE QUIRE, USMCR

Marines gained experience by employing skills they'll most likely use during future deployments and field operations.

"When we are forward deployed, we can fill various billets outside [of] our [military occupational specialty]," said Henriquez. "This prepares Marines for real-world scenarios they wouldn't be ready for without this training."

ITX is an opportunity for air and ground combat elements to combine, preparing them to operate as a Marine Air-Ground Task Force long before the necessity arises—whether forward deployed, in combat or in another training environment.

"This allows us to showcase what our Marines are capable of and what we can bring to the fight," said Cerrato. "It ensures all units have cohesion and open lines of communication to operate seamlessly in a forward-deployed environment."

Sgt David Bickel, USMC

WAINWRIGHT, ALBERTA **3d ANGLICO Provides Fire Support, Coordination During Maple Resolve**

Marines with 3d Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), Force Headquarters Group, Marine Forces Reserve worked alongside Canadian soldiers from 2 Royal Canadian Regiment (RCR), relaying information for close air support



CPL GABRIELLE QUIRE, USMCR

Capt David Wi, a JTAC with 3d ANGLICO, views video feeds from an RQ-7 Shadow unmanned aerial vehicle with a scout observer from Reconnaissance Platoon, 2 RCR, during Exercise Maple Resolve in Wainwright, Alberta, May 26.

missions at the Canadian Manoeuvre Training Centre, Camp Wainwright, Alberta, during Exercise Maple Resolve 2017, which began May 14.

Hosted by the Canadian Army, Exercise Maple Resolve is an annual three-week multinational simulated war

that brings together approximately 7,000 servicemembers from NATO allies from across the world to share and learn tactics while strengthening foreign military ties.

During the exercise, 3d ANGLICO aided in planning and coordination and provided support for units within 2 RCR.



F-35B Lightning II aircraft with VMFA-121, stationed at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, fly over Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, May 10 during Exercise Northern Edge 17. As Alaska's premier joint-training exercise, Northern Edge is conducted to strengthen interoperability among various aircraft from across the Armed Forces. (Photo by LCpl Jacob A. Farbo, USMC)

“Our mission is to provide fire support and coordination to units, mainly foreign, adjacent to the Marine Air-Ground Task Force,” said Corporal Daniel A. Reyes, a joint fires observer with 3d ANGLICO.

During Maple Resolve, Marines with 3d ANGLICO communicated with various aircraft from the Royal Canadian Air Force to provide essential support for units on the ground.

“We coordinated artillery, mortars and fires and close air support from fixed- and rotary-wing aircraft and provided live intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance video downlink feeds from unmanned aircraft systems assets, allowing the ground commander to better identify associated risks in the tactical risk assessment,” said Captain David Wi, a joint terminal attack controller with 3d ANGLICO.

The firepower control team is the smallest element within 3d ANGLICO. Its primary function is to call for and adjust artillery fire and coordinate fires and close air support attacks using targeting information from an observer or other asset with real-time targeting information.

“Two firepower control teams from 3d

ANGLICO were out in the field for six days in wet and cold weather environments, fully integrated with the maneuver elements of 2 Royal Canadian Regiment to provide terminal control of fires,” Wi said.

Participating in large-scale exercises among foreign militaries and in realistic environments, like at Maple Resolve, ensures that Marines maintain high levels of proficiency and readiness necessary for worldwide deployment.

“Training in exercises like these is important,” said Wi. “It tests each military’s ability to perform missions in conjunction with one another and allows us to gain a better understanding of the other’s procedures as well as hone our own skills in preparation for real-world events.”

The exercise verified 3d ANGLICO’s abilities and facilitated a stronger working relationship with Canadian forces.

“We got some good training—it was cold, wet and fun,” said Reyes. “Once we figured out each other’s tactics and procedures, I think both sides had a pretty good time.”

Cpl Gabrielle Quire, USMCR

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, ALASKA Fifth-Generation Aircraft Integrate During Northern Edge 17

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 121, VMFA-232 and Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 152 supported Exercise Northern Edge 17 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER), Alaska, May 1-12.

Northern Edge is a large joint-force exercise hosted by Alaskan Command, a subordinate unified command of U.S. Northern Command, focusing on the integration and interoperability of U.S. forces.

Through training in anti-air warfare, offensive air support, control of aircraft and missiles and aerial reconnaissance, the exercise provided the opportunity to test future applications of combat operations and weapon capabilities.

“These exercises don’t happen very often,” said Major Adam Wellington, the aviation safety officer with VMFA-121. “It allows us to showcase the F-35B Lightning II and show what it can do to participate with other aircraft from the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy.”



CPL LUKE HOOGENDAM, USMC

Marines with 2d LAR enter the water to practice floating an LAV during a field exercise at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 8. The exercise required Marines to test the amphibious capabilities of LAVs while highlighting the importance of swift, accurate reconnaissance for future operations.

This was the first large-scale exercise in U.S. Pacific Command in which the F-35B Lightning II, F-22 Raptor, F/A-18 Hornet, F-16 Fighting Falcon, F-15 Strike Eagle and other aircraft worked together to conduct various mission-critical training iterations and help pilots become more proficient in tactical combat operations.

While the pilots trained in key aerial exercise components, maintainers from VMFA-121 worked closely with the Air Force's 90th Fighter Squadron, which allowed them to see the major differences between the F-35B and F-22.

"Some of the benefits we get while here at JBER are that we get to work with our fifth-generation counterparts, the U.S. Air Force F-22 Raptor maintainers," said Staff Sergeant Anthony Klamecki, the quality assurance staff noncommissioned officer in charge with VMFA-121. "The main focus we're trying to show is the capability of this aircraft with other services. One of the obstacles we have faced is the distance between maintenance control and the location of the aircraft. It has taught us how to keep communication between the maintenance controllers and the maintainers on the line so we can try to streamline the launching process of the aircraft."

Designed with Marine Corps and Air Force integration in mind, Northern Edge allows Marines to identify their shortcomings in order to avoid them in the future.

Sergeant Major Jason Kappen, the VMFA-121 sergeant major, said he hopes that the opportunity to integrate with the Air Force during Northern Edge will increase his Marines' understanding of the Air Force's maintenance procedures. In the event of needing to work together, "we will be able to easily integrate," he said.

LCpl Jacob Farbo, USMC

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. LAVs "Dive in" During Field Ex

No matter the climate or place, Marines are known for their ability to accomplish a mission even through the harshest of terrains—and so are their vehicles. Marines with 2d Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion tested the amphibious capabilities of their light armored vehicles during a field exercise at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 8.

"LAVs are proficient in traversing rough terrain and overcoming obstacles quickly, while providing precise intelligence to the rear to safely navigate the terrain

when moving up the battlefield," said Corporal Christopher Wesoly, a machine gunner with 2d LAR. "LAVs are one of the most proficient assets in the Marine Corps, capable of covering land and water swiftly."

During this exercise, Marines became comfortable driving their vehicles in the water.

"It's a scary concept for Marines to take a vehicle that they drive on roads every day and tell them to drive it into the water and 'swim' across a river," said First Lieutenant Noah Andersen, a platoon commander with 2d LAR. "Training Marines to be able to swim their LAVs brings a unique skill set to the fight and to the mission, furthering the effectiveness of the Marine Corps."

Without LAVs, the ability to patrol would be drastically longer or hinder a unit's ability to complete their mission due entirely to non-traversable terrain.

"Whether we have a platoon or a battalion, we bring the fight to [the enemy] and can accomplish any mission we've been assigned," said Andersen.

Cpl Luke Hoogendam, USMC



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COURTESY OF NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

A Marine machine-gun squad in action in Nicaragua in 1927. Browning Model 1917A1 .30-caliber machine guns were carried by the Marine companies tasked with capturing Sandino, the most wanted man in Nicaragua.

Ambush at Quilali

Part I
By Maj Allan C. Bevilacqua
USMC (Ret)

“Captain Livingston was wounded immediately after action started and the undersigned has assumed command pending arrival of Lieutenant Richal.”

Excerpt from the report of
1stLt Moses J. Gould, USMC
Dec. 30, 1927

For a Marine during the decade of the 1920s—a Marine looking for action—there is no better place to find it than the Central American country of Nicaragua. Torn by civil strife between two competing political factions for 70 years, gunfire is a constant backdrop to everything that takes place in Nicaragua, from elections to horse races. A tour of duty in Nicaragua is a guarantee of action.

In all of Nicaragua there is no better

guarantee of action than in what is designated as an official Marine Corps area of responsibility, the Northern District. Nowhere in the Northern District offers more in the line of near-daily excitement than the province of Nueva Segovia. In the high hill country of Nicaragua, as different from the coastal regions of Nicaragua as port is from starboard, jutting like an arrowhead into neighboring Honduras, Nueva Segovia is the stronghold of Augusto Nicolas Calderon Sandino. Sometimes called “Cesar,” Augusto Sandino is a dedicated Marxist revolutionary whose avowed intention is to overthrow the Nicaraguan government and seize power by armed force.

In reality, Sandino has nothing approaching a nationwide following that could put him in the presidential palace in Managua. What he does have, though, are enough loyal followers, “Sandinistas,” to make himself a constant vexatious

disturbance to peace and tranquility in the Northern District. In addition, Sandino, for all practical purposes a surrogate of Moscow, has the covert backing of the Soviet Union, through the mechanism of the Communist International (Comintern), in the form of money and arms channeled through Mexico and next-door Honduras.

Marines had been in Nicaragua at the request of that country’s president once before. Now, as the year 1927 prepares to turn over the watch to the new year of 1928, they are there again. None of them have any expectation that 1928 will arrive in quite so boisterous a manner as it in fact does. First Lieutenant Christian F. “Frank” Schilt, newly arrived in Nicaragua, certainly has no inkling that before the year is little more than a week old, his name will be in newspapers and he will be scheduled for an audience with the President of the United States.

Beginning in mid-October 1927 and

From the outset, the advance on Quilali is less an approach march than an endurance contest. The route is, for the most part, an uphill climb, a muscle-straining, back-aching grind.

continuing into the late weeks of November, human intelligence sources, some reliable, others questionable, tell of increasing Sandinista activity in and around the isolated mountainside village of El Chipote. On Dec. 16, a reliable intelligence source reports of a scheduled meeting between Sandino and several of his top commanders. Remote and apparently little more than a hamlet, El Chipote is said to be accessible only by foot path. Merely reaching El Chipote will require an arduous trek over extremely challenging terrain.

The prize, bagging the most wanted man in Nicaragua, is worth the effort. The immediate problem is that no one knows precisely where El Chipote is. There are no maps of the area; the only word of mouth reports simply say that El Chipote is “several miles north” of Quilali. In the latter half of October a reinforced platoon led by First Lieutenant Moses J. Gould in search of the crew of a missing DeHavilland DH-4 from Marine Observation Squadron One (VO-1M) reaches and briefly occupies Quilali. The area north of Quilali remains an unknown.

Another problem is that even though Sandino is heartily detested by both of Nicaragua’s feuding political factions, the overwhelming majority of the people in Nueva Segovia are, if not committed Sandinistas, at least Sandino sympathizers. Any operation with El Chipote as its goal will be an incursion into territory that is unfriendly at best and hostile at worst.

An approach march to El Chipote will be uphill all the way, with numerous deep canyons to be crossed, all by trails capable of accommodating little more than foot traffic. The Marine Corps, spread thin throughout the Northern District, has nothing within striking range of the objective area. It is estimated that merely reaching the supposed location of El Chipote will consume a week of extremely hard hiking unless the weather turns bad—then it will take longer.

On Dec. 18, two Marine columns depart their base camps and began what will prove to be one of the most punishing overland treks in Marine Corps history. Captain Richard Livingston’s 51st Company, Third Battalion, Fifth Marines moves out of its base at Jinotega at first light that day. At the same time, First

Lieutenant Meron Richal leads his Headquarters Company from its operating base at Telpanica. The two units will join at Quilali and begin combing the area to the north in an effort to locate El Chipote, pin down and eliminate Sandino. There will be daily air cover provided by VO-1M.

At 120 men each, both companies are rather small. While they may be skimpy in manpower, these forces are well-armed. In addition to the M1903 service rifle carried by individual Marines, Livingston’s and Richal’s companies each field eight Browning Automatic Rifles (BAR) and a pair of Browning Model 1917A1 water-cooled .30-caliber machine-guns. For added punching power, both commands carry with them an 81 mm Stokes mortar and a 37 mm infantry gun. For added combat power, both patrols are reinforced by a platoon of the Marine-trained and Marine-led Guardia Nacional de Nicaragua. A relatively recent organization, the Guardia is fast proving itself to be an effective body of fighting men. Pack mule trains handled by locally contracted Nicaraguan



This recruiting poster is one of many designed by James Montgomery Flagg. For Marine recruits looking for action, Nicaragua was the place to be in the 1920s.

muleros provide for the transport of heavy equipment, rations and ammunition. They will not be long proving themselves to be a problem.

From the outset, the advance on Quilali is less an approach march than an endurance contest. The route is for the most part an uphill climb, a muscle-straining, back-aching grind. In some places the trail, barely wide enough to accommodate



Augusto “Cesar” Sandino, center, and his general staff, Francisco Estrada, Santos Lopez, Juan Pablo Umanzor and Socrates Sandino.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Marines trained Guardias Nacionales in Nicaragua in the 1920s; the Guardia participated in the Marines' attempt to capture Sandino in December 1927.



USMC

Marines patrolled the jungles of Nicaragua. The challenging terrain took a heavy toll on the men and the pack mules that accompanied them.

a man, clings precariously to near perpendicular hillsides. Frequently the trail descends into deep gullies, then rises sharply again. Each hill seems steeper and higher than the one before.

1stLt Thomas J. Kilcourse, who leads the 2d Platoon of Capt Livingston's column, keeps a daily record of the march "to be delivered to my wife if I am killed."

December 19: "... Pack train in much confusion—mules stampeded—supplies strayed—packages broken. ..."

December 20: "... Muleros deserting—apparently afraid to go with us. ..."

December 21: "... Trail across half dry swamp—going bad in places—two mules died."

December 22: "... Made 3 miles—roads bad—mud knee deep—mules in poor shape—men working hard ... impossible to

make time—hillsides extremely steep. ..."

December 24: "... Xmas Eve—Crossed Guale mtns in fog and rain—Altitude 4,500 feet—Roads almost impassable—mud waist deep in places—everyone soaking wet and covered with black, gummy mud from head to foot—Morale of men excellent despite hardship. ..."

Day after punishing day, this is the way of it; no sooner than one menacing hill is overcome than another is encountered. In his journal, Kilcourse records, "... One or two pack mules dying of sheer exhaustion daily." The loads carried by the lost mules must be distributed among other mules that are already overloaded and tiring fast or on the backs of Marines. "Men in good spirits and surprisingly good shape," Kilcourse writes. There is something unsaid here that tells of the relative staying

power of a mule and a Marine.

Then, on Dec. 30, as both columns are within a few miles of Quilali—ambush!

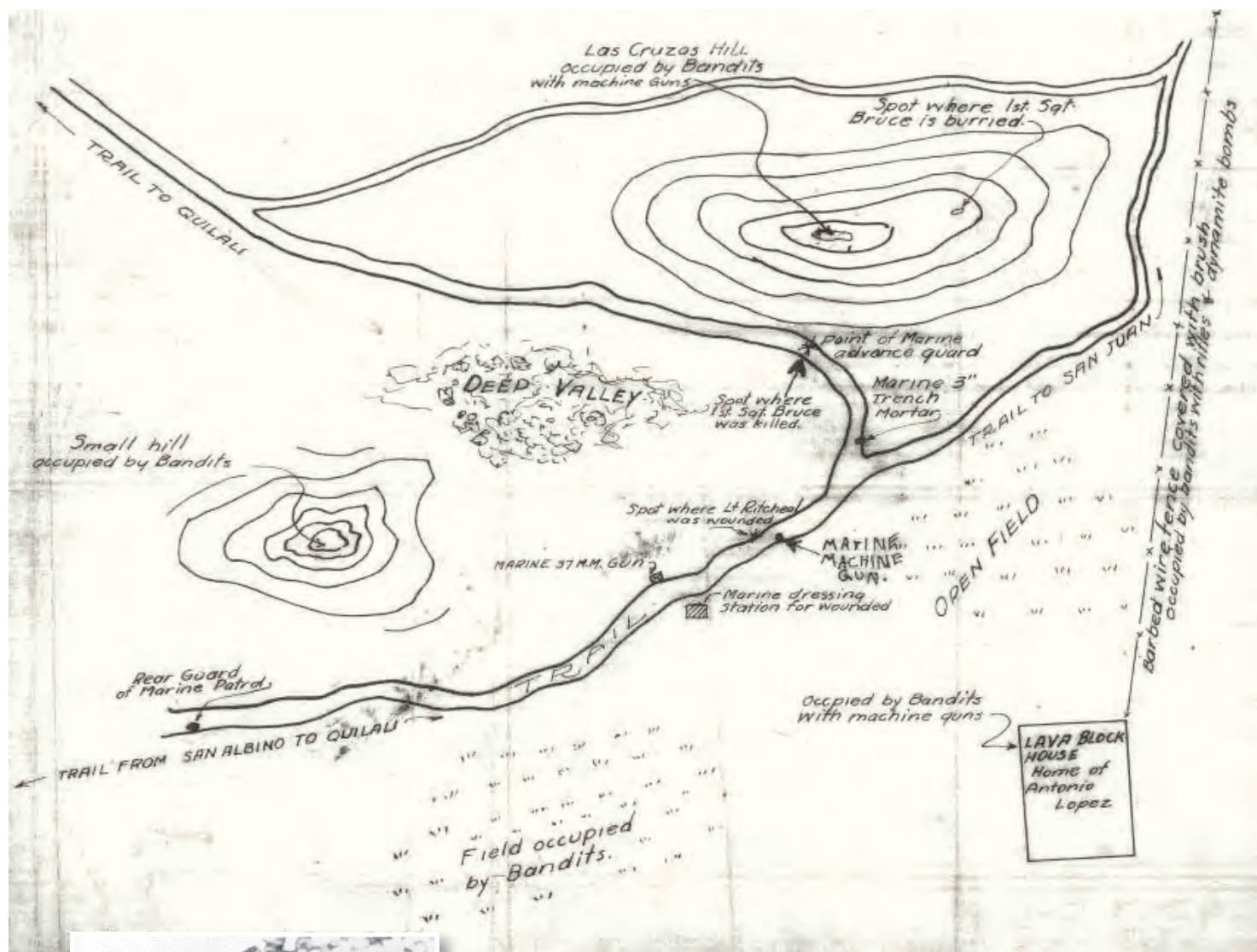
At about 0900, both Livingston's and Richal's commands are taken under intense and coordinated fire by Sandinistas in well-prepared positions. It is not a hasty ambush; rather it is one of detailed planning and preparation. From the moment each column departed its operating base, its organization, daily direction and progress has been reported on by Sandino sympathizers. Armed with this information, Sandino has had adequate time to call in his units from their sanctuary in Honduras, and he has called them in numbers.

From tactically advantageous and well-dug in positions, Sandinistas unleash vicious rifle and machine-gun volleys, accompanied by the murderous blasts of "dynamite bombs" that are somewhat of a Sandino trademark. Nothing more sophisticated than several sticks of dynamite taped together and thrown like a grenade, a dynamite bomb produces a staggering blast effect that is almost always fatal to anyone caught in it.

Casualties among the Marines are immediate. Both commanders, Capt Livingston and Lt Richal, go down in the first fire laid on their lines. Shot squarely in the chest, a through and through wound that exits his back, Capt Livingston is quickly attended to by LT William T. Minnick, USN, the medical officer. It is apparent, though, that Livingston will require more treatment than Minnick can provide on a Nicaraguan hillside. The command of Livingston's column is assumed by the executive officer, First Lieutenant Moses J. Gould, who will prove himself a man more than equal to the situation.

A scant 12 miles away at the local landmark of Las Cruces Hill, Richal is felled by a 7.62 mm round fired from a German-made Mauser Model 1898 military rifle. The round strikes Richal beneath his left eye and exits through his right eye, taking the eye with it. Incredibly, in great pain and bleeding profusely, Richal somehow remains in action. Propped against a tree and ably assisted by Gunnery Sergeant Edward G. Brown, Richal is successful in redeploying his command in hasty positions from where it is possible to open effective return fire. The situation is a bad one, though. The Sandinistas hold the commanding high ground. The position of Richal's Marines is tenable but only barely so. They must break out to join Livingston's column, led now by the dependable 1stLt Gould who is dribbling blood from a pair of non-serious but no less painful wound sites. First, though, they must simply stay alive.

Desperately wounded as he is, Richal



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES



FILE PHOTO

Augusto Sandino, Nicaragua's Marxist Revolutionary leader.

still has a few cards to play. In a slashing hail of incoming fire punctuated by the ear-shattering blasts of dynamite bombs, German-born Sgt Otto Roos sees an opportunity and wastes no time in taking advantage of it. Already wounded himself, Roos deploys his section in a barely perceptible wrinkle in the ground that affords some cover from which his men can deliver more effective return fire on the well-entrenched Sandinistas on the slope of Las Cruzas Hill. It is not enough to turn the tide, but it forces the Sandinistas to be a bit more cautious in exposing themselves, lessening their fire on the Marines below. It buys enough time for Private First Class Herbert Lester to lend a hand.

Herbert Lester is leading a pack mule

loaded with ammunition when he sees Roos and his men scramble to their new position. He snatches the lead of a second mule that is carrying a machine gun and makes his way to join Roos. A machine gun and some ammunition may go a long way to suppressing the Sandinistas who continue to fill the air with lead. Miraculously unhit by the fire directed at him, Lester finds a bit of shelter where he is able to unload both mules and assemble the machine gun. The Browning Model 1917A1 is no lightweight. The gun alone, with a full water jacket, weighs in at 34 pounds, while the tripod tips the scales at 53 pounds, a total weight of 87 pounds. With a pair of 250-round belts of .30-cal. ammunition draped about his neck, Lester

The situation is a bad one, though. The Sandinistas hold the commanding high ground. The position of Richal's Marines is tenable but only barely so. They must break out to join Livingston's column.



COURTESY OF USMC HISTORY DIVISION

LtCol Elias R. Beadle, USMC, and Maj McClellan are shown with the Guardia Nacional's sloth, Cucalo. LtCol Beadle trained and organized the Guardia in the late 1920s in Nicaragua.

carries gun and tripod to a point where he can place effective fire on the Sandinistas above. The Sandinista fire slackens immediately.

Between them, Roos and Lester have stemmed the torrent of lead directed at them, but Lt Richal's column is not entirely out of the woods. Richal's Marines are no longer in danger of being wiped out, and they occupy much better ground to defend. Even so, confronted by large numbers of Sandinistas on higher ground in every direction, they are absolutely pinned down, relatively secure where they are, but certainly dead should they attempt to move out. They must find a way to press on and link up with Gould at Quilali. For the moment, though, their sole available course of action is to hold where they are. Any attempt to cover the

distance between Las Cruces Hill and Quilali now would result in nothing but their being cut to pieces.

Air support, Ross Rowell's VO-1M, is sitting immobilized on the ground, prisoners of ceiling and visibility conditions that would make clearing a medium-size tree a feat worth celebrating. Like Richal's force hunkered down at Las Cruces Hill, Rowell's aircrews can do nothing but wait and hope that flying conditions will improve.

While Richal's column is pinned down and VO-1M is grounded by weather, Moses Gould, who has taken over for the seriously wounded Richard Livingston, is in a bit better shape. Less than a half mile from the rendezvous point at Quilali, Gould is also confronted by large numbers of Sandinistas. Here too the Sandinistas

occupy well-prepared positions on dominant terrain and enjoy every advantage.

Thanks to the well-conducted actions of the advance guard led by Thomas Kilcourse, the planned ambush is discovered and engaged before it can be sprung. Accurate fires by the advance guard beat down the would-be ambushers, allowing Gould to deploy the main body and establish fire superiority. Five Marines and one Guardia are killed but the Sandinistas suffer more heavily and are forced to break off the action. At approximately 1030, Gould's column enters the comparative safety of Quilali.

Editor's note: Read Part II of "Ambush at Quilali" in the September issue of Leatherneck.

Author's bio: Maj Allan C. Bevilacqua, a Leatherneck contributing editor, is a former enlisted Marine who served in the Korean War and the Vietnam Wars as well as on an exchange tour with the French Foreign Legion. Later in his career, he was an instructor at Amphibious Warfare School and Command and Staff College, Quantico, Va.



Confronted by large numbers of Sandinistas on higher ground in every direction, they are absolutely pinned down, relatively secure where they are, but certainly dead should they attempt to move out.

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"Let me guess. No softener."



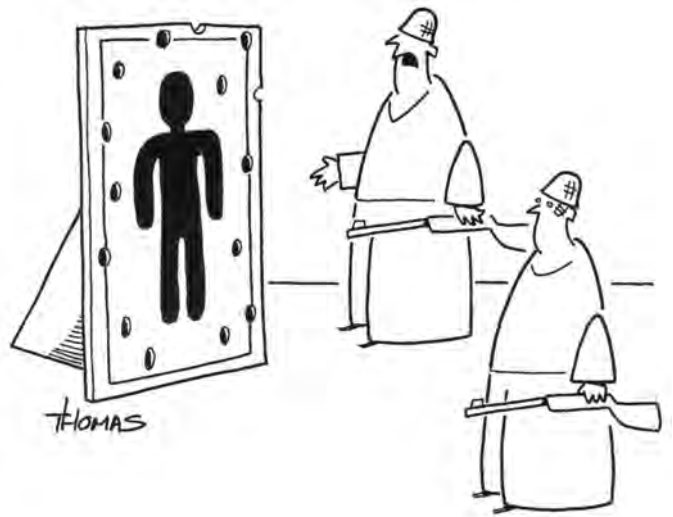
"Well, son, say you have eight insurgents and only four on your fire team. How many targets do each of you have?"



"Weekend reserve drills are good practice for deployments in many ways."

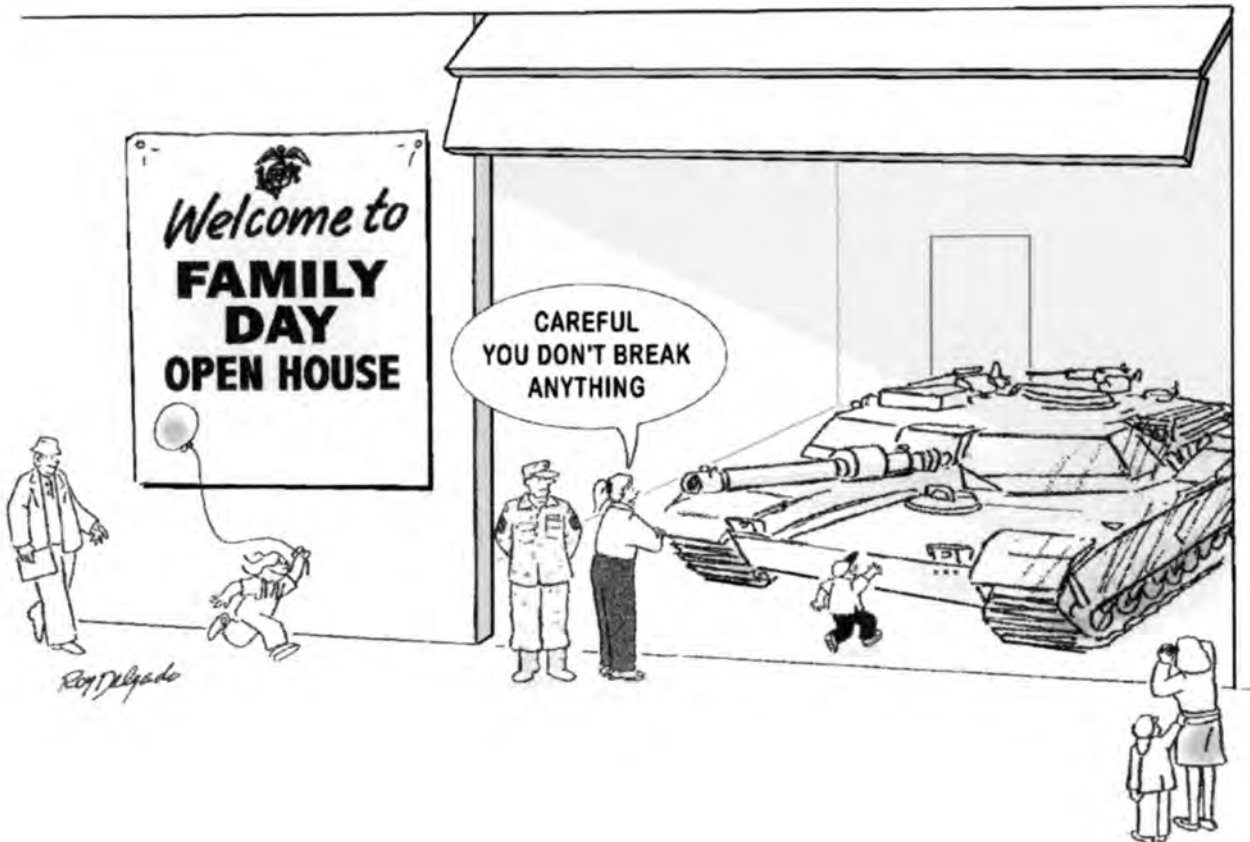


"All your training and we still get lost in IKEA."



"Wait until I get it in Photoshop."

"Of course we do things on a sound statistical basis."





Joint Communication Team Marines Support Forces Worldwide

By Capt Jared Swancer, USMC

Marine communicators, picture this: You're in the back of a C-130 with 56 combat-loaded paratroopers. The 70-pound ruck strapped to your legs feels twice as heavy, but you are hooked up, shuffling to the door. It will all be worthwhile shortly. Finally, the moment you've been waiting for—you hear the jumpmaster's commands—"Stand-by ... GREEN LIGHT, GO!" A step, a kick, and you jump out into the prop blast at 130 knots, 1,250 feet above ground level. Your ruck is cumbersome no more. You look up to see your parachute open above, and now you've got a little more than a minute to enjoy your weightlessness under canopy and a view of the world below that only you and your fellow paratroopers get to experience. Then, it's time to hit the ground, put your kit into action and employ your craft providing drop zone communications for the ground force commander. If this sounds like your idea of a great day at work, the Joint Communications Support Element (JCSE) just might be for you.

Born as the Communication Support Element (CSE) in 1961, the organization became joint in the 1980s with the addition of Marines and Sailors to complement the soldiers and airmen who previously filled the ranks. The JCSE's history is marked by a continuous high state of readiness despite constant adaptations of organizational structure and operational relationships. Since its inception, JCSE has supported thousands of deployments worldwide, yet remains difficult to locate in the chronologies of large operational forces because the majority of its deployments involve small teams trained and equipped to enhance the capabilities of much larger commands.



CPL DREW SVEEN, USA



CPL DREW SVEEN, USA



RICK MAUPIN

JCSE servicemembers (opposite page) load onto a C-17 aircraft in preparation for an airborne operation at MacDill AFB, Fla., on Dec. 4, 2015. Capt Jared Swancer, 2d Joint Communications Squadron, (above) exits a drop zone following a combat equipment airborne operation in Brooksville, Fla., Feb. 6, 2016. Cpl Bryant Viera and Sgt Daniel Bunnell, 2d JCSE, (left) establish a UHF SATCOM net utilizing a PRC-117G on Pine Key Island, Fla., July 23, 2014.



Above: Servicemembers of the JCSE land in the ocean during an airborne operation near Key West, Fla., Nov. 1, 2016.

Right: Sgt Daniel Bunnell, 2d Joint Communications Squadron, JCSE, participates in a React to Contact drill at Altair Training Solutions in Immokalee, Fla., Sept. 19, 2016.



CPL DREW SVEEN, USA



Inset: Sgt Arturo Marquez, 3d Joint Communications Squadron, JCSE, conducts a forced march as part of a predeployment training program aboard MacDill AFB, Fla., Aug. 19, 2015.

SGT ROBIN DAVIS, USA



CPL DREW SVEEN, USA

packable initial or early entry systems and can scale up to a full JFHQ, which requires two C-17 aircraft for transport and can support up to 1,500 users. Additional capabilities include a mobile command center that can be loaded aboard a C-130 or C-17 aircraft and a Shipboard Carry-on SATCOM System (SCOSS) that provide on-the-move shipboard connectivity.

Located at MacDill Air Force Base, JCSE deploys teams globally. Each team can be as small as one to four servicemembers and supports contingency operations, Joint Task Force/Joint Special Operations Task Force Headquarters, maritime missions aboard Naval and commercial vessels, crisis response and humanitarian assistance missions. Teams can be mobilized with only 18 hours notice. To meet these mission requirements, JCSE maintains a professional force of highly trained communications experts who possess the latest forms of network and telecommunications skills and training. Within JCSE, noncommissioned officers (NCOs) are empowered to lead teams to maximize the efficiency and impact of the organization's resources. These NCOs are equipped with the requisite skills acquired through technical and leadership training from service schools and industry, and developed by their direct involvement in planning and operational support normally reserved for senior staff NCOs and officers. JCSE communicators also have the opportunity to receive advanced training in marksmanship, combat lifesaving training, and survival training, and many achieve industry certifications.

At any given time, these JCSE communicators are deployed on nearly every continent. Recent operational support includes: Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Inherent Resolve, Operation Resolute Support, Operation United Assistance, Exercise Pacific Partnership, Hurricane Matthew Humanitarian Assistance, support to numerous USSOCOM operations and support to the President of the United States.

While consistently deployed in support of real-world operations, JCSE also is

continually engaged in training and exercises supporting both conventional and special operations forces and partner nations around the globe. Whether hitting a European drop zone with an Army Airborne Infantry unit, supporting an airfield seizure with the 75th Ranger Regiment, or conducting amphibious operations with the Navy and Marines from a French naval vessel, JCSE is an integral part of the global force in readiness.

Through nearly six decades of service, JCSE prides itself on developing and mastering cutting edge technology. JCSE was among the first organizations to effectively test, field and employ satellite communications terminals in 1969. In the 1970s, modernization efforts began when a group of innovative NCOs re-engineered satellite communications equipment to fit within a footlocker-sized package. As technology has evolved, JCSE communicators have found ways to improve and tailor communications packages by reducing footprint and weight, while increasing function and capability. The innovative modernization program leverages the latest in commercial off-the-shelf communications and power production equipment, which includes fuel cell and renewable energy solutions. As JCSE's modernization program looks to the future, some of the focus areas are shipboard C4 enhancements, integrated communications vehicles capable of on-the-move and at-the-halt communications, small form factor generators, advanced extra high frequency (AEHF) satellite terminals, global architecture, defensive cyber operations and cloud computing capabilities.

A tour with the JCSE is a challenging but extremely rewarding assignment and interested active-duty and reserve Marine communicators are encouraged to apply. Servicemembers can take advantage of the unique opportunity to become members of a highly acclaimed and historic airborne unit. Adept, mature, independent communicators always are in high demand. Marine NCOs assigned to JCSE can expect exciting, high-tempo assignments that will undoubtedly enhance their experience and skill sets as communicators and serve them well when they return to the operating forces as leaders in the communications field.

Author's bio: Capt Swancer is a company commander at the Joint Communications Support Element at MacDill AFB, Tampa, Fla. He has made multiple deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Freedom's Sentinel.



Despite its relatively low profile, the JCSE has no shortage of accolades from supported commanders regarding the expertise and support JCSE has continuously provided during exercises, military operations and humanitarian missions.

Today, the JCSE provides rapidly deployable, scalable, en-route and early entry Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Combat Systems, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C5ISR) capabilities across the full spectrum of operations in order to enable rapid establishment of the Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) and bridge Joint C5ISR requirements. The Airborne Forced Entry Kit is just one of many capabilities that JCSE offers in support of the warfighter. JCSE equipment sets include small, man-



COURTESY OF USMC HISTORY DIVISION

Marines return fire while on the move through Dodge City where little to no cover was available. Bomb craters were often the best protection available.

“For Their Gallantry and Intrepidity” The Marines of 3/26 in Operation Meade River

By Kyle Watts

The Tet Offensive, Khe Sanh and the battle for Hue City were important and defining moments of the Vietnam War in 1968, and Marines carried out countless other less-remembered and less-publicized operations throughout that year. Many of these battles, though shorter in duration and smaller in scale, proved consequential to the United States military’s broader plans for success.

The warriors of Third Battalion, 26th Marine Regiment fought in many such lesser-known engagements. If 1968 had been a busy year for the Marine Corps, it was especially so for 3d Bn, 26th Marines. In fact, 3/26 had been busy ever since their arrival in Vietnam two years earlier.

“Every time something came up, they said ‘Send in the 26th Marines,’ ” remembered Lee Solomon, a veteran from “Lima” 3/26. “We lived in the jungle. We

didn’t have an area of operations. We were nomads in country and everywhere we went, we were in a fight. I spent 19 months in combat there and that’s all I did the whole time.” The unit fought through numerous smaller operations and played central roles in large-scale engagements such as the battle of Con Thien and the siege of Khe Sanh.

Experiences in the bush ranged from hilarious to harrowing. These moments shaped the battalion’s spirit and cemented the Marines’ dedication to each other through every successive operation. During one example from late summer 1968, the battalion found itself on the side of a mountain in the middle of a typhoon, while moving through the Hai Van Pass. After several days soaked and submerged, with many Marines dealing with the pervasive ailment known as trench foot, the battalion began hiking out. Staff Sergeant Karl Taylor of India Co moved up and down

the column, enthusiastically encouraging everyone. “Come on Marines! This is no worse than anything you experienced in boot camp!” “Gunny T,” as Taylor was affectionately known, had been a drill instructor at recruit training and Officer Candidates School. He knew how to properly motivate a group of Marines. The battalion made it to Da Nang, adding a typhoon to their ever-growing list of Vietnam life experiences.

Like Gunny T, everyone had a nickname—“Muddy Boots,” “Tumbleweed,” “Stretch” and “Bambino” to name a few. Some were earned and some were bestowed unwillingly upon the recipient. Many times, a nickname was intended to make things less personal just in case the Marine was killed. Other times, the nickname originated as a term of endearment and bolstered camaraderie.

By November 1968, 3/26 was a battle-hardened brotherhood of infantrymen.

Their warfighting skills were soon called upon to help clean out a notoriously dangerous area known to the Marines as Dodge City.

The area occupied less than 15 square miles of ground southwest of Da Nang. The terrain was flat, bounded by rivers, and covered in rice paddies and elephant grass. The most prominent feature was a high railroad berm running like a spine straight across the entire sector. Considering its relatively small size, Dodge City held a disproportionately large number of enemy combatants. The region acted as a staging area and command post for Viet Cong (VC) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units moving toward the United States military installations at Da Nang. Over the years, the enemy turned the landscape into an intricate network of dug-in bunkers that connected underground tunnels, hidden spider holes and innumerable concealed positions. Given the terrain advantage afforded to the enemy, Marines in Dodge City usually were taking fire before ever identifying the origin.

Marines had been in Dodge City many times before. Even 3/26 had fought there just a few months earlier, in July 1968, during Operation Mameluke Thrust. Dodge City always proved its reputation as a wild, free-fire zone full of action. Marine commanders finally had enough and decided to clear it out for good.

The operation, known as Meade River, was set to commence on Nov. 20. Overall, the plan was straightforward: surround the area, squeeze the circle tight, and kill every bad guy until the Marines met in the middle. To conduct this massive cordon-and-search operation, six infantry battalions from three Marine regiments and a Battalion Landing Team were brought together. Enough helicopters to create the largest Marine air assault of the Vietnam War were still not sufficient to move everyone into place. Some battalions were trucked into position, while others still humped on foot.

Commanders designed the cordon to place a Marine every 15 to 20 meters surrounding Dodge City. Inch by inch, hole by hole, the Marines were to shrink the cordon, thoroughly searching every hiding place and eliminating any threats. In the early morning hours of Nov. 20, the operation commenced. Shortly after 0800, Marines sealed off Dodge City and snapped the cordon shut.

The Marines of 3/26, settled into position on the southwest side of the cordon near the junction of the railroad berm and Route 4. On their left flank, 2d Bn, 7th Marines initiated the opening moves. For 3/26, the first two days were relatively quiet. As the battalion maintained its portion of the line,



Above: Deep underground and connected by tunnels, bunkers found in the Hook concealed fire ports looking out over the open ground through which Marines passed.

Below: Marine "tunnel rats" crawled underground, rooting out enemy soldiers who were still alive, and tallying the ones who were dead. Many of these routes were collapsed by Marine air and artillery support.



2d Bn, 7th Marines moved into the attack and South Vietnamese troops worked to evacuate the remaining civilians from Dodge City. At night, VC and NVA fighters attempted to escape the trap. Numerous times, the enemy was discovered moving through the darkness and was fired upon by the Marines. Sometimes they fell and their bodies were found the next day. Other times, the figures melted back into the shadows. The Marines of Kilo and India companies engaged in nightly firefights, taking sniper rounds, grenades, and 60 mm mortars. Casualties were sustained on both sides.

On Nov. 23, 3/26 began pushing north and east from Route 4 into an area known as "the Horseshoe." The size of one grid

square and named for the distinctive U-shaped stream that bounded the area, the Horseshoe proved to be the first enemy stronghold Marines encountered in Dodge City. On the opening day of the operation, 2/7 hit resistance there almost immediately and was thrown back multiple times. The Marines of Lima 3/26 were sent in direct support of the next assault. Lima encountered the same stiff resistance during which four Marines were killed and many others were wounded.

The following day, Marines made a fifth attempt to overrun the enemy dug into the Horseshoe. Kilo 3/26 was tasked with supporting 2/7 in the assault alongside Lima. Intense machine-gun and sniper fire raked the Marines as they attempted



COURTESY OF CHRIS TIBBS

Officers from Co I pose for a photo during Operation Meade River. The company commander, Capt Ron Hoover, is second from left, and Lt Chris Tibbs, 2d Plt leader, is third from the left.

to move less than 200 yards from their starting point. As Marines endured heavy fire and moved through dense foliage, the attack stalled yet again. Kilo received the brunt of this round, sustaining half of the overall casualties for the day.

Resistance in the Horseshoe was tougher than anticipated. If this opening act of Meade River was any indication of how the entire operation would go, it did not bode well for the Marines. Clearly, more VC and NVA occupied Dodge City than had been anticipated, and they made it clear that they would not surrender.

Recognizing the futility of another infantry assault, the Marines pulled back from the Horseshoe and let loose an artillery barrage. Howitzers decimated the area during the entire morning of Nov. 25. That afternoon, Marines finally overran the Horseshoe and reached their objective at the railroad berm.

The battalion had been bloodied early while entrenched in the middle of the heaviest action. Unfortunately, this would not be the last enemy stronghold they encountered, nor the last time they found themselves in the middle of the action. Their path to the center of the circle would be unlike any other participating battalion.

Over the next few days, Marines all over Dodge City shrank the cordon inch by inch. Many Marines carried 3-foot long probes with a "T" handle on top to help locate the enemy beneath their feet. Marines stabbed the probes into the ground as they walked, and if the probe slid easily

into the dirt, the Marines knew they were standing on top of an enemy tunnel, spider hole, weapons cache, or any one of the numerous dwellings the NVA had burrowed into the landscape. The battalion's command chronology for this period noted that supporting arms fire was often ineffectual: "It was found that the enemy had to be ferreted out by individual Marines, using tactics similar to those used during World War II during the Island Campaigns."

It was also difficult to coordinate air support. With Marines closing the cordon on an already cramped area, any bombs or napalm dropped were considered "Danger Close." Additionally, many of the enemy fortifications were deep in the ground, reinforced with concrete, and covered in several feet of dirt and railroad ties stolen from the berm running through Dodge City. From these fortifications, the enemy could wait out any barrage and emerge to ambush infantry units passing through the open rice paddies.

Despite these challenges, 3/26 pushed on. Probes revealed weapon stocks, tunnels, booby traps, shallow enemy graves and spider holes. Often, the enemy revealed their positions only after the Marines unknowingly walked over their hiding places. Sometimes, the best way to locate enemy positions was for a Marine to expose himself, wait to be shot at, and look for the muzzle flash.

Some Marines had their own methods for locating the enemy. At one point dur-

ing the operation, Corporal Felipe Torres and other Marines with India Co were moving through elephant grass scouring the ground. Torres stopped India's forward observer, Larry "Beaver" Gore.

"Beaver," he said, "I think I smell them."

"You smell them?" Beaver replied.

"Yeah, they're over there in that brush," said Torres.

"Well, go get them!" said Beaver.

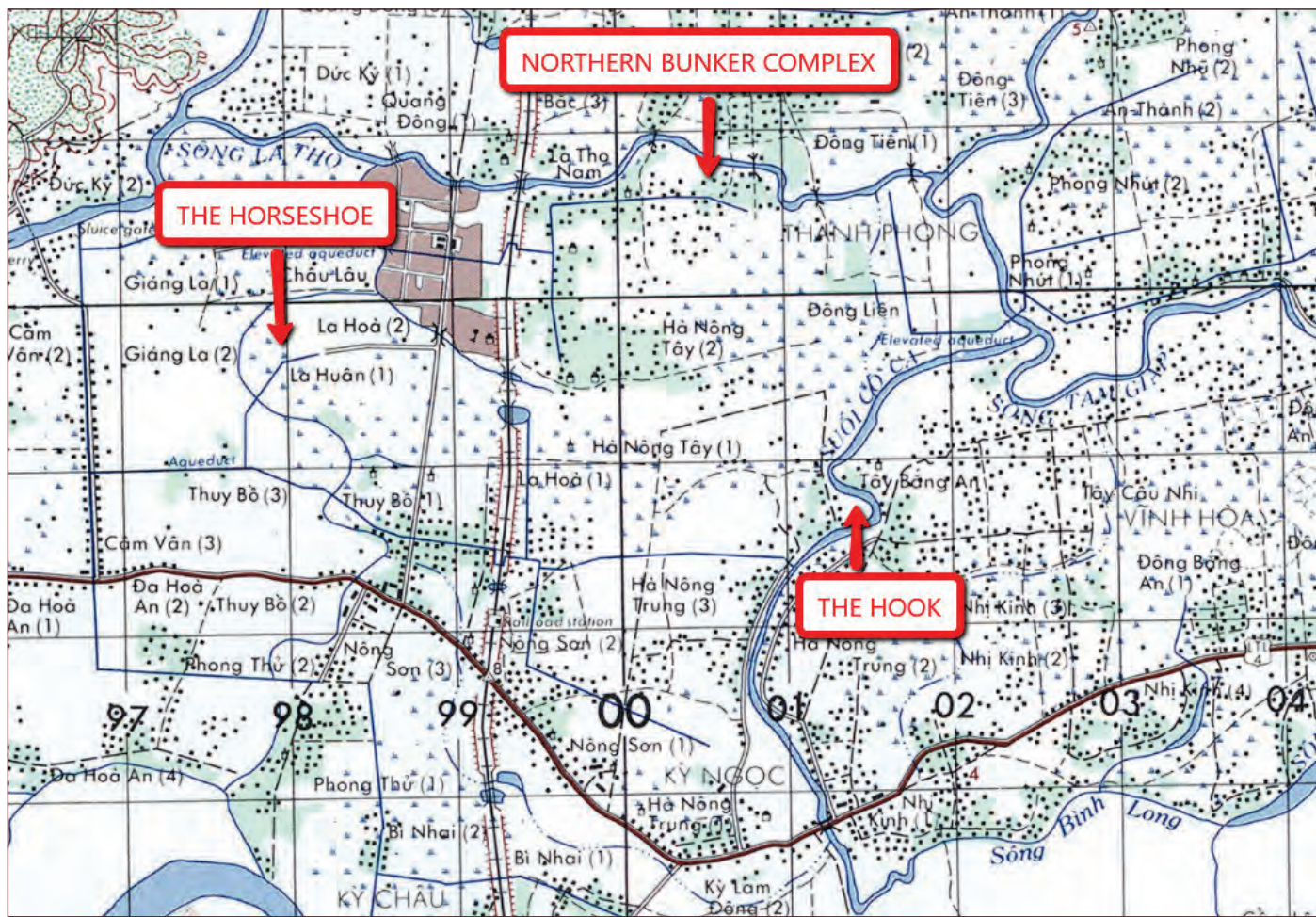
With the platoon leader in tow, Torres low-crawled into the brush. After several meters, he stumbled upon two VC creeping out of a spider hole. They were in the process of handing up a grenade to throw at passing Marines. Startled at the sight of the VC popping out of the ground right in front of him, Torres yelled, "Hey dude!" and immediately shot both enemy soldiers at point-blank range with his pistol. Torres backpedaled through the brush as fast as he could into his platoon leader, who opened up over his head with a submachine gun. The enemy fighters fell back into their hole, dropping the grenade.

Several yards away, the commander of India Co, Capt Ron Hoover, was talking on the radio when he heard Torres' shout. The shout was immediately followed by the loud bang of a .45, rhythmic explosions of a submachine gun, and finally the overwhelming detonation of a grenade. Still trying to take in the events of the last few seconds, Hoover watched a foot tumble through the air and land on the ground next to where he was standing. "Great," he thought, "I've lost another lieutenant." Much to his relief, both Torres and the lieutenant emerged unscathed from the brush. Cpl Torres would later be awarded the Silver Star for heroic actions demonstrated throughout Meade River, and eventually he rose to the rank of colonel.

Thanksgiving Day came and passed as a brief respite for the battalion. On their right flank, 3/5 prepared to punch into the heart of Dodge City. Their destination was a small bend in the Suoi Co Ca River. Since the river was smaller than 400 meters across at its widest point, the Marines didn't know this tiny pocket of land housed the NVA command center for the whole Dodge City area. To them, it was simply "the Hook."

For two days, 3/5 battled for position. An entrenched enemy repulsed each new assault wave, leaving the battalion with many casualties. The type and number of enemy bunkers within the Hook were unlike those faced in the Horseshoe and were defended even more tenaciously. On Dec. 3, 3/26 was called in to replace 3/5 on the front lines.

The previous assaults had demonstrated two things. First, an infantry assault into the Hook without air support was essen-



COURTESY OF USMC HISTORY DIVISION

tially suicide. Second, the bunkers in the Hook were so well-constructed that many of them could withstand artillery and air strikes. Given these facts, 3/26 chose a new, more risky tactic: bombarding the Hook while the infantry assaulted. This was the only way to keep the NVA's heads down long enough for the Marines to maneuver into position. "Danger Close"

was redefined as 500-pound bombs and napalm began falling within 100 yards of the Marine line.

Just across the river from the Hook, 2/5 and BLT 2/26 had closed the cordon from the east up to the Suoi Co Ca's banks. They watched as Marine F-4 Phantoms screamed in overhead unloading their ordnance. Showered in dirt and debris

from the explosions, the battalions pulled back from the river while simultaneously trying to avoid friendly fire.

Into this maelstrom, 3/26 surged. From the ground, India Co's Second Platoon leader, Lieutenant Chris Tibbs, watched as one F-4 flew in low and fast along the river. On its first pass, one tank of napalm tumbled to the ground and exploded on target. On the second run, Lt Tibbs watched in horror as the Phantom's remaining tank of napalm released from the front, but hung up on the back. Finally the tank released, overshooting the target and heading right at the Marines' position. As Tibbs watched the tank barreling towards him, he was hit—not by a bullet or bomb—but by Gunny T. At a sprint, Taylor speared Tibbs to the ground, screaming, "Hold your breath, lieutenant!" Miraculously, the napalm exploded without harming the Marines.

The battalion fought along the south side of the Hook. Casualties mounted and some platoons were reduced to squad-sized elements. Enemy snipers and machine gunners took their toll ambushing

Marine F-4 Phantoms flew north to south along the Suoi Ca Co River to drop their ordnance into this tiny pocket of land as 3/26 assaulted from the west.



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An aerial view of the Northern Bunker Complex where 1/1 assumed a blocking position on the banks of the La Tho River as 3/26 assaulted from the south.

Marines in the open as they advanced merely 20 yards away. Hospitalman James C. Tarrance moved throughout the field administering first aid. When one Marine fell wounded, HN Tarrance courageously moved forward, positioning himself in full view between the enemy and the injured man. He was shot through the neck and killed. For his heroism, Tarrance was posthumously awarded the Silver Star. Another Marine armed with a M72 Light Anti-Tank Weapon stood to fire his rocket at an enemy bunker. Simultaneously, an enemy soldier stood and leveled his rifle to fire. The Marine adjusted his aim and managed to pull the trigger faster than his enemy, obliterating the soldier and his AK47.

The battalion continued fighting in this fashion for two more days before they finally overran the Hook. On Dec. 5, nearly 100 dead enemy soldiers were found as the Marines consolidated and mopped up any remaining tunnels and bunkers. Some dead could not be counted as they were buried deep under destroyed fortifications. Fewer than 10 prisoners were taken.

The NVA and VC proved they were not

giving up and would not go down without a fight. The cordon squeezed the enemy into the center of Dodge City with their backs to the La Tho River. As 3/26 pushed them north out of the Hook, Marines from 1st Bn, 1st Marines along the north side of the cordon picked off any NVA who attempted to ford the river and escape the trap. The enemy knew the end was near and prepared to fight to the death. This last holdout became known as the “Northern Bunker Complex” and proved to be the bitterest fighting of the entire operation.

With the cordon now significantly smaller in size, some participating battalions were sent home. The Marines of 3/26 thought they would be among the homebound units due to their fierce fighting experiences and depleted numbers. This presumption, however, was not correct. Two battalions east of the Suoi Ca Co departed. Still in the center of the circle, 3/26 remained in place to finish the job.

To reinforce their dwindling numbers, two additional rifle companies were assigned to 3/26 for their assault into the Northern Bunker Complex. On Dec. 7, the battalion began the 1,000-meter drive north into the last enemy stronghold to

complete the pacification of Dodge City.

As expected, the initial assaults were met with heavy resistance. Moving through waist-high brush and elephant grass, Marines were frequently within feet of enemy positions before their locations were identified. By nightfall, the battalion was forced to halt and dig in. The battalion had taken many casualties, and Marines spent the night searching through the darkness for their fallen. The numerous bomb craters marking the landscape offered the only protection against the enemy emplacements.

By this point, air support was impossible to coordinate. With 3/26 to the south and 1/1 across the river to the north, the enemy was confined to a very narrow strip of land. One attempted napalm strike went awry, hitting Lima Co positions and burning four Marines. Eventually, even mortars were forbidden due to the extreme likelihood of friendly fire incidents. The Northern Bunker Complex would have to be taken by Marines on the ground with rifles, grenades, pistols and Ka-Bars.

The Marines could sense the end of the battle was near and were eager to complete the mission. A tree line concealing enemy

bunkers stood less than 100 yards away from the Marine front across an open, dried up rice paddy. Just beyond that was the La Tho River and 1/1 in their blocking position. In the late afternoon of Dec. 8, commanders ordered the battalion into the attack, hoping to crush the remaining NVA with one final push. Preparing to dig in for the night, 3/26 hastily readied instead to advance once more. They had not had time to attempt a reconnaissance of the area to determine what they were up against, but they knew it would be fearsome.

As the sun set over their left flank, all companies began the creep forward. Standing exposed and inching across the paddy, an eerie silence pervaded the battlefield. "It went dead quiet," said Tibbs. "There was not a round fired by the bad guys, the most quiet we'd had all day. Talk about foreboding!" Punctuated only by the ringing in their ears and the sound of their footsteps, the calm continued until the Marines moved approximately 30 yards ahead of their position. The crack of a single sniper's bullet ripped through the air. Marines heard over a radio transmission that a platoon leader from India Co was hit. As the call crackled over the radio, all hell broke loose.

NVA machine guns concealed in bunkers caught 3/26 in the open. Marines dove or fell into the numerous craters or against a small rice paddy dike. "Every time I'd lift my head, that gun would open up and the rounds would come zinging," said Mike "Diddybop" DiGiampaolo. "It's like a weed whacker going through the bush."

All over the field, Marines were cut off and pinned to the ground. Tibbs' platoon, now barely a squad, occupied a bomb crater. Calling it their "Alamo," Tibbs told the Marines to bring all the dead and wounded back the crater, where they would hold their position.

Hearing Tibbs' order, Taylor crossed the kill zone, finding Capt Hoover, the commanding officer of India Co.

"Skipper, give me that blooper," he said. "My men are in trouble. I've got to go help my Marines."

Hoover handed him the single shot M79 grenade launcher they had found abandoned earlier in the operation.

Taylor took off into the twilight. Turning to Larry Gore, Hoover said, "Beaver, don't let him do anything stupid. Go with him."

Taylor and Beaver moved from cover to cover, finding wounded Marines at each stop along the way. They began directing those who could move and assisting those who could not back to the crater occupied by 2d Plt. As Beaver and the other Marines moved and carried the wounded, Taylor lobbed a steady stream of grenades from



COURTESY OF CHRIS TIBBS

SSgt Taylor served as the company gunny for Co I, thereby earning his nickname Gunny T. Days prior to the operation, the battalion received new camouflage utilities. Unfortunately, they did not receive enough, or the right sizes, leaving some Marines, like Taylor, wearing a mix of old and new.

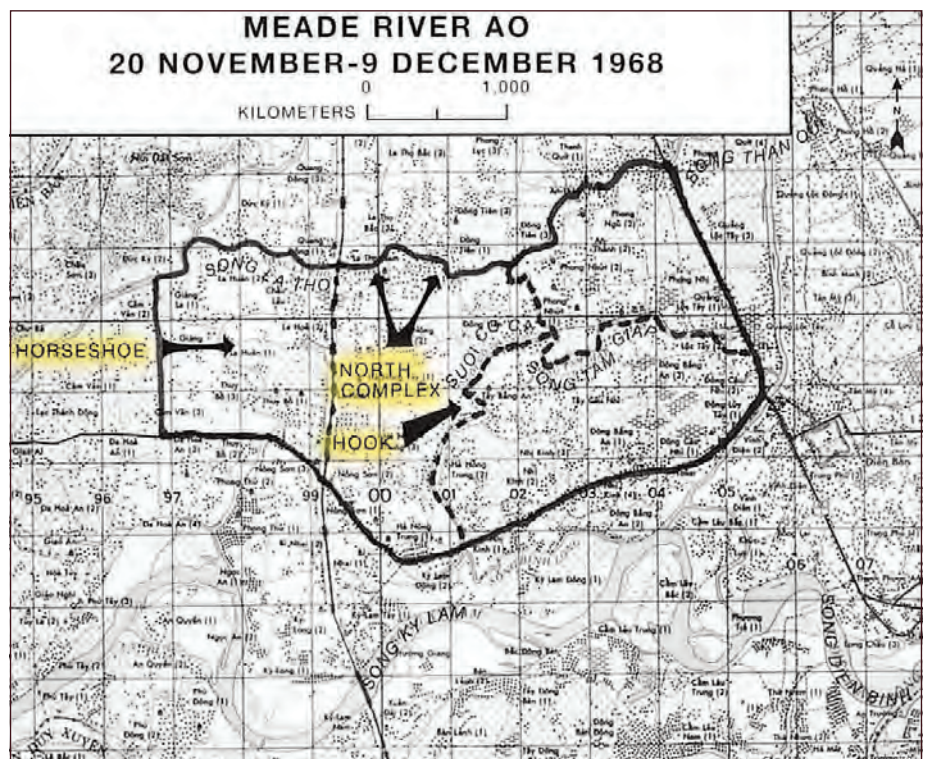
his M79 into the enemy machine gun positions.

Multiple machine guns pinned down the Marines that night, but one in particular wreaked the most havoc in India Co's section. An NVA soldier skillfully operated a 12.7 millimeter heavy machine gun. "He was good with it," said Beaver, "He knew enough to fire 6 inches off the

ground and small bursts." The gunner found Taylor in his sights as the Marine moved about the field. Taylor found him as well and kept the gunner's head down with the M79 as Beaver and the others rescued the wounded.

After multiple trips from the crater into the field and back with wounded Marines, Taylor and Beaver crawled out one final time. They joined some of the Marines who were farthest ahead of the others and trapped close to the enemy bunkers. By this time, Taylor had successfully silenced two enemy guns. The last remaining machine gun maintained a steady rate of fire. The Marines were trapped on the ground, with several already wounded. Taylor took all the M79 ammunition the Marines with him had left and ordered Beaver to get everyone else back to the crater. They began to fall back, when suddenly through the darkness behind him, Beaver heard the dueling explosions of grenades versus machine guns. "It was horrible just hearing that," he remembered. "We said, 'Oh my God, he's still alive. He's still alive!' We kept hearing 'BLOOP. . .BOOM,' then, 'BOW BOW BOW BOW BOW!' " Charging through the open rice paddy, Taylor assaulted the NVA heavy machine gun, launching grenades as he ran.

The Marines heard the blooper fire once more, a retort from the heavy machine gun and then the field fell silent. When they finally reached his position, the Marines found Taylor dead, killed by the enemy machine gunner. They also discovered that although wounded, Taylor succeeded in knocking out the machine gun with his



COURTESY OF USMC HISTORY DIVISION

last shot. For his heroic actions, supreme sacrifice and dedication to his Marines, SSgt Taylor was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.

Following the duel, the Marines spent the remainder of the night engaged in hand-to-hand combat. The remaining NVA and VC in the area made their final attempts to break through the Marine lines with the intent to escape or die, but never surrender. By daybreak on Dec. 9, few of the enemy remained to fight.

The battalion launched the final assault of the operation, overrunning the Northern Bunker Complex all the way to the La Tho River. The resistance they encountered was determined, but lacked the scale and organization of the previous day. At 1800, Operation Meade River was officially declared complete.

The Marines fell back out of the Northern Bunker Complex and waited for their ride out of Dodge City. Helicopters dropped the remainder of the battalion back at the Rock Crusher outside of Da Nang. Tibbs marched with his platoon through the gates. "Who are you?" shouted a guard.

"India 2," replied Tibbs.

The guard continued questioning. "Where is the rest of the platoon?"

"This IS India 2!" Tibbs fired back.

Only 10 Marines remained out of 44.

Meade River dealt a tough blow to the

NVA. More than 1,000 enemy soldiers were killed. Just over 100 were captured. Nearly 400 fortified bunkers were destroyed, along with innumerable tunnels and spider holes. Meade River also exacted a high cost on the seven participating Marine battalions. More than 100 Marines were killed and 510 were wounded. Of those totals, 3/26 suffered 33 killed and 141 wounded. For their gallantry and intrepidity, Marines from 3/26 received 10 Silver Stars, one Navy Cross, and the Medal of Honor. President Richard Nixon also awarded the battalion the Presidential Unit Citation for their role in the operation.

The pacification of Dodge City minimally affected the long-term goals of the U.S. military in Vietnam. Following the operation, no Marine units were tasked to remain in the area to sustain the hard-fought victory. Enemy forces quickly moved back into the area and regained strength.

Fifty years ago, 3/26 wrote the story of Operation Meade River. Today, for many of the veterans who fought there, its story continues writing them.

"I saw the real Marines come out," said Hoover. "I did not have to tell them anything. We had a camaraderie there that I've never seen in any other infantry outfit that I was with in my 20 years. They were second to none. Karl [Taylor] was

a hero that stood out among heroes. He was not the John Wayne type, but Karl had a dedication to the Marine Corps that all drill instructors have, and his troops were most important in his mind."

For the Marines of 3/26, Operation Meade River received mixed reviews. To some, their time in Dodge City was no different from the rest of their tours. For Marines accustomed to living in the bush and advancing from operation to operation in constant combat, the events of November and December 1968 blended in with the rest.

For others, Meade River remains the fight they will never forget. No span of time can erase the memories of the Hook and Northern Bunker complex. No other point of their time in Vietnam can be more meaningful than the night Taylor gave his life for them.

Author's note: To the warriors of 3d Battalion, 26th Marines: Always on point. Thank you for your service, your sacrifice, and entrusting me with your stories. I wish you and your fallen all of the honor you deserve. Semper Fidelis.

Author's bio: Kyle Watts is a veteran Marine captain and communications officer. He currently lives in Richmond, Va., with his wife and two children.



COURTESY OF USMC HISTORY DIVISION

Significant rains through the opening days of the Operation Meade River made closing the cordon an even more difficult and miserable task.

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“Leaning Forward”

Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Talks Modernization and 21st Century Solutions

Story by Sara W. Bock
Photos by Sgt Melissa Marnell,
USMC

An open door conveys a simple yet powerful message of inclusion and receptivity, and that’s exactly the kind of message that Sergeant Major Ronald L. Green wants to send. It’s why the 18th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps has instructed his staff to leave the door open to his suite of offices in the Pentagon. Green views his influential position not as one of power, but of op-

portunity—to engage, connect, listen and advocate.

According to his staff, he has a reputation for coming out of his office to enthusiastically greet visitors when he hears them stop in, especially when those visitors are Marines and their family members.

Whether he’s in his office in the Pentagon or traveling to installations across the globe, he clears time in his schedule to talk with Marines and listen attentively to what they have to say.

He’s genuine and sincere in his interactions and surprisingly relatable given

his status as the Corps’ highest-ranking enlisted Marine.

“What you see is what you get,” one of Green’s senior staff members said of him—and it only takes a few minutes in his presence to realize that it’s true. His authenticity is unmistakable when his face lights up as he talks about the Marines he interacts with and advocates for every day.

Two-and-a-half years into his tenure as the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Green is refreshingly in touch with the issues that face today’s junior Marines. There’s little doubt that this is a byproduct



Above: During the President's Reception at the National Montford Point Marine Association Convention where he was a guest speaker, SgtMaj Green visits with Montford Point Marine veterans in Jacksonville, N.C., July 27, 2016. "You're still on the team," is Green's message to Marine veterans.

Left: SgtMaj Green speaks to Marines assigned to Marine Corps Security Force Regiment, Naval Weapons Station Yorktown, Va., May 16, 2016.

of the time he spends listening to them.

"We're interested in an individual not just as a Marine, but as a person," said Green, speaking for himself and for General Robert B. Neller, the 37th Commandant of the Marine Corps, adding that both he and Gen Neller want to know what interests Marines; what their aspirations and goals are; and what concerns and ideas they have.

When Green and Gen Neller talk to Marines across the fleet, they receive an overwhelmingly positive response about

the Corps' recent push to solicit ideas and suggestions from all Marines, regardless of rank, Green said. And like true Marines, they also ask the Commandant and Sergeant Major about opportunities to deploy, train and increase their skill sets. "They're saying they're excited about the fact that we're listening to them, and we're also paving the way for their success in the future," said Green of the Marines he and the Commandant have interacted with recently. "We're not necessarily looking to live in the past. There are elements of the past that we must bring to the future, always, that make us who we are, but there are a lot of things that we did in the past that we don't do anymore," he said, adding that he and the Commandant are committed to moving the Corps forward. The opening of combat arms military

"They're saying they're excited about the fact that we're listening to them, and we're also paving the way for their success in the future," said Green of the Marines he and Gen Neller have interacted with recently.

While at the 2016 Single Marine Leadership Symposium to deliver opening remarks, SgtMaj Green takes the time to meet with Marines in attendance at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 27, 2016.





Marines with Marine Forces Command, Norfolk, Va., take a photo with SgtMaj Green during his visit, May 16, 2016. Green has a reputation for being relatable and approachable to young Marines and in touch with the issues they face.

occupational specialties to Marines who are female, he said, is just one of many examples.

Green is honored to serve as the senior enlisted advisor to Gen Neller. Both are intent on “leaning forward” to prepare the Marine Corps not only for today’s fight but also for the fight of the future, he said. In February, the Commandant released his “Message to the Force 2017: Seize the Initiative,” which called on Marines to improve readiness, become smarter, take care of themselves, protect what they’ve earned and help modernize the Corps.

Whenever the opportunity presents itself, Green walks down the hallway from his office to Gen Neller’s, where he always asks the same question: “What can I do to assist the team?” He appreciates the opportunity to spend so much time with the Commandant and with Gen Glenn M. Walters, the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. It’s a position he never dreamed he’d be in, he said, and he doesn’t take it lightly. He especially enjoys being able to sit down with lance corporals and tell them about the one-on-one conversations he has with the Commandant, assuring them that Gen Neller has their best interests at heart.

The sergeant major is enthusiastic about the Commandant’s Innovation Challenge,

Along with the other services’ senior enlisted advisors, SgtMaj Green delivers testimony on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C., regarding servicemembers’ quality-of-life issues Feb. 26, 2016.

which asks Marines to submit their suggestions for using robotic or autonomous systems to replace certain tasks, or any solutions they’ve devised that would make them or their fellow Marines more efficient or safe on the job.

“The Commandant’s put the challenge out there and the Marines are accepting it, big time. They’re going for it with their ideas ... they’re getting involved in these things because this is their future,” said Green, drawing attention to a stack of point papers on his desk written by enlisted Marines.

Recognizing that today’s young Marines will lead the organization in the

future, Green is determined to do his part to leave behind a Corps that is adequately equipped to face the challenges ahead. And he insists this won’t happen without making some big changes.

“The 20th-century model we’re working off of with 21st-century Marines doesn’t work,” said Green, who added that the Corps can do anything but not everything, and being able to prioritize is key.

He believes that several things need to happen in order to effectively modernize the Corps, and there’s no better time than the present. After all, he said, the demand signal for the Marine Corps is greater than it’s been over the course of his 34-year career.

“Taking a look at our PME [professional military education] and making sure we’re teaching—we’re in the 21st century—we’re adaptive, and we’re teaching, coaching, training and mentoring with the right tools. Being versatile, realizing that people learn in different ways,” he said.

The Corps can’t move forward or advance its warfighting capabilities without a budget for technology and equipment, and Green’s position allows him the opportunity to advocate for necessary funding. He has testified on Capitol Hill three times and often makes office calls on members of Congress, focusing not as much on the mission—that’s the Commandant’s job, he said—but on the things Marines need in order to train effectively and win battles.

“Most of my effort is talking about ... the things that support our efforts in warfighting or quality of life—where that meets. So I talk a lot of quality of life and readiness,” said Green. “You know, when you talk quality of life and mission, a lot of times we’ll cut out the quality of life things to get at the mission. Our job is to





SgtMaj Green and Gen Neller greet Marines following a ceremony in honor of the Corps' 240th birthday at the Pentagon, Arlington, Va., Nov. 9, 2015. Green is honored to serve as the senior enlisted advisor to Gen Neller, and both are committed to modernizing the Marine Corps to be fully prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

keep that as balanced as possible. We know we've got to fight, secure the nation, our freedom, our liberty—and freedom is not free. It takes a little bit of 'some of this' to do all of 'that.' Families have readily given up some of those things and haven't cried a foul about it, but like I said, I don't want us to use a 20th-century tool on a 21st-century vehicle or service."

During his conversations with Marines, Green has noticed some "trending" topics. Many want to know about the impact of the new blended retirement system. Others are asking about educational opportunities and about funding for childcare, extended gym hours, the Single Marine Program and transition readiness. Green does all that he can to advocate for Marines on these issues and others, motivated by the knowledge that when they and their families are well-taken care of, Marines are more combat-ready and able to focus solely on the mission.

"I try to take full advantage of whatever assets I have to make other people happy, to make them better, to help them find success, to help us accomplish our mission and pay strict attention to quality of life—not just of Marines and Sailors, but their families as well," said Green.

He takes pride in the Marine Corps' recent efforts to more fully understand the entire human being on both a physical and spiritual level. In particular, the new force fitness program is something that makes him optimistic about the future. It focuses on understanding human performance and the science of the human body in order to make Marines not only more lethal, but more resilient and fit than ever before.

"You know, when you talk quality of life and mission, a lot of times we'll cut out the quality of life things to get at the mission. Our job is to keep that as balanced as possible."

Green encourages Marines to think of personal development as a three-legged stool with the legs representing body, mind and spirit. In order to be balanced, all three legs must hold the same amount of weight.

"Whenever that stool's not balanced, we have a problem," he said.

The spiritual fitness discussion, said Green, isn't necessarily about religion;

rather, it's about starting a conversation about "what makes us who we are." The ability to make sound moral decisions, treat people the way you would want to be treated, engage in meaningful relationships and be able to forgive one's self and others—these are what Green considers the tenets of the Corps' recent emphasis.

"That's how we preserve the force," said Green. "This is about force preservation and this is about the investment that we make in people—in creating Marines."

Green attributes continued success in recruiting to the fact that the Corps attracts new Marines simply by advertising its ethos—honor, courage and commitment.

"We're not selling stuff, gadgets—we advertise that to show how that actually assists the warfighter in accomplishing the mission, but we talk people. That's who we recruit and who we take care of," he said.

With more than 30,000 new Marines brought into the fold each year including, as Green pointed out, a larger-than-ever subset of enlisted Marines with degrees, he feels strongly about the importance of working to retain those Marines who are high quality. When those Marines choose to leave the Corps, he thinks it's



SgtMaj Green visits with a Marine at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Aug. 17, 2016. SgtMaj Green and Gen Neller consider it important to re-evaluate how the Corps coaches, teaches, trains and mentors Marines.

important to ask “why?” and learn from their answers.

“We’re looking at how we coach, teach, train, mentor, [and] sometimes counsel to make sure that the Marines are getting what they came for. Each individual came for something, and whatever that something is, we’re sitting down talking to the Marines about it,” Green said.

For those transitioning from active duty, Green wants to be sure they are supported through transition readiness programs.

Whether they go into a technical trade, into education or into the workforce, Green recognizes the need for a pathway that supports them, through credentialing, licensing or some other avenue, and enables them for success outside the Corps.

The most difficult aspect of his job, he said, is when Marines lose their lives, and lately, it’s happening far more at “home” than in combat.

“We don’t have ‘garrison’ anymore; there’s no such thing as garrison,” said

Green. “You know, if you’re not in a war-fighting situation you’re back in the rear, but the rear has really become forward because the enemy’s everywhere now.”

Whether Marines are lost in combat, killed in accidents, take their own lives or die from illness or injury, every life has value, he said. In 2016, he added, the Corps lost more than 140 Marines, only one from injuries sustained in combat. Many were lost due to things that could be considered “preventable.”

“For those who are doing risky living, we go to the conversation about ‘Protect What You’ve Earned.’ That’s a conversation that starts with our number one cancer and that’s alcohol,” he said. He tells Marines to put an eagle, globe and anchor in their left breast pocket and take it out each day and hold it as a reminder of the commitment they made to the Corps and the feeling they had the day they earned it as recruits.

This concept of “sustaining the transformation” will help ensure that the values and sense of commitment to the Corps inculcated during recruit training or



While participating in a live-fire mission with Battery A, First Battalion, Tenth Marines at Fort Stewart, Ga., Aug. 24, 2016, Green takes the time to talk with one of the unit’s Marines.

officer candidate school continue to be fostered throughout a Marine's career. Green believes that this is pivotal to reducing incidences of alcohol abuse, suicide, unlawful behavior, and most recently, the type of conduct that led to the creation of the Marines United group on Facebook, which placed the Corps under a highly unfavorable spotlight.

These are the kinds of things that keep Green up at night, he said, but he doesn't shy away from talking about Marines United.

"We owned up to it, and we're going to do something about it, so we have a task force that's in full force, that's looking across the Marine Corps culture. We're trying to see, 'How did we get there?'" said Green of Marines United. "We have to fix whatever allowed that to happen."

It won't be a one-time fix, Green said, acknowledging the fact that with a constant influx of new Marines, the Corps will have to be vigilant about keeping the conversation going to ensure there are no reoccurrences. The rise of social media coincided with nearly 15 years of a high operating tempo and continuous combat in the Marine Corps, and he believes that this timing contributed to what he's not afraid to call a failure on the Marine Corps' part.

"We're trying to see how Marines go off the right path to get into this 'cancer' and we have to do some radiation or something to get it out of there. We have to rid ourselves of that," he said.

The nation expects its Marine Corps to be better, Green said, and he is confident that progress will continue to be made in eliminating behavior that is incongruous with what the Corps stands for.

"We pride ourselves on being better than that," he said with sincerity, adding that he tells Marines they have two families: the one they swore into and the one they were born into or married into. "I tell Marines, make sure you don't disgrace either one of them."

He extends that same guidance to Marine veterans as well. "You're still on the team. You're still carrying that ethos, those core values with you ... if you're a Marine for life you've got to act like it. You've got to be an advocate for the Corps always," he said. The Marines United Task Force, he said, has partnered with Veteran Service Organizations like the American Legion, VFW and Marine Corps League to help spread that message.

What keeps Green going through the more challenging times? The Gold Star families who have lost their Marine in combat but still want to give; the Marines who look to him for motivation and inspiration and rely on him to "bring it"



SgtMaj Green visits a recovering Marine at the Palo Alto VA Hospital in Palo Alto, Calif, Aug. 15, 2016. Green consistently demonstrates his concern for all Marines as he travels throughout the Corps.

every day (and they bring it back twofold, he said with a grin); and just the simple fact that he wakes up every day a Marine. "Just being part of the organization is a highlight!" he said.

Looking to the future, Green sees a smarter and more lethal Marine Corps,

What keeps Green going through the more challenging times?

The Gold Star families who have lost their Marine in combat but still want to give.

and Marines who work hard every day to prepare for the next fight. He's encouraged by programs and resources like those provided by the Marine Corps Association & Foundation, such as unit libraries, battlefield studies, e-readers and professional military education opportunities, as well as publications and awards. He considers these contributions and the contributions of other supporting organizations like Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society to be "priceless."

"I can't imagine a Marine Corps without a Marine Corps Association & Foundation," he said.

His message to today's Marines? To take full advantage of what the Corps has to offer.

"Whether it's the opportunity to defend liberty and freedom, our Constitution, our flag, our way of life, our families—take full advantage of that opportunity," Green said. "And, you know, enjoy the time while you have it. This Marine life, it doesn't last forever. There are two ways out—to be either carried out or to walk out. If you're lucky enough to walk out, you want to be able to look back and say, 'You know what? All the days weren't easy. I didn't expect them to be easy, but I had a good time doing it.'"

One day, Green's time as Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps will come to an end, and he'll be the one walking out looking back, but for now, he'll continue to enjoy the opportunity to help improve the lives of Marines and their families and help make the Corps stronger and more prepared for the next fight.





CPL TREVON PERACCA, USMC

In this 2014 photo, members of the Camp Pendleton Fire Emergency Services Department worked alongside local and regional departments and agencies to contain the Tomahawk fire on Naval Weapons Station Fallbrook, Calif. The department recently was recognized as the Department of Defense Fire Department of the Year for 2016.

Pendleton Named Fire Department of the Year

The Fire Emergency Services Department at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., was recognized as the Department of Defense Fire Department of the Year for 2016 in a message released by the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, May 17.

This was the department's second time receiving the award, and as one of the largest fire departments in the DOD, its members were responsible for more than 3,700 emergency responses in 2016—156 of which were wildfires. Additionally, the department's members routinely work with fire departments in the surrounding communities to maximize the use of assets and training. These partnerships led to 373 mutual aid assistance calls the department supported outside the installation last year.

Chief Thomas C. Thompson, Camp Pendleton's fire chief, credits the unit's success to the individual firefighters and the process improvement they have worked on during the past five years.

"I am surrounded by very cool operators that get to practice their craft," said Thompson, who said he was humbled by the recent recognition. "It is a testament to what they do, how they do it and the impact it has on the community."

Camp Pendleton's training grounds support various tenants, most notably I Marine Expeditionary Force, whose

ranges and wild land span over 125,000 acres.

In addition to the department's recognition, Assistant Chief Jeff Cunliff-Owen was selected as the Fire Officer of the Year for his work as the wild land coordinator. The programs he leads in maintenance and suppression training throughout the year ensure that each individual firefighter is getting the education and accreditation necessary to support the installation.

"They are the ones that make us look good," said Cunliff-Owen of the firefighters and captains in the department. "We get it done here because of them. I'm just steering the bus."

Both Thompson and Cunliff-Owen agree on the importance of each individual firefighter to the team's success, and more than anything, they want their department to do good work.

"We can see the impact we make every day," said Thompson. "Not every job is like that, and [we] get satisfaction by helping our community and serving our warfighters and families."

GySgt Lynn Kinney, USMC

Prowler Squadron Deactivates After 35 Years

Hundreds of Marines and family members gathered to pay homage and say goodbye to Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron (VMAQ) 4 in a deactivation ceremony at Marine Corps Air Station

Cherry Point, N.C., June 2, as they officially completed their sundown after 35 years of supporting operations around the world.

Tracing their lineage back to Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron One in the 1950s, VMAQ-4 was officially commissioned on Nov. 7, 1981, as part of Marine Aircraft Group 14, Second Marine Aircraft Wing. Originally, the squadron's "Seahawks" flew the EA-6A Electric Intruder and then transitioned to the EA-6B Prowler in the 1990s.

"I was with VMAQ-4 when it was a newborn and up until its first steps," said Colonel James Anderst, USMC (Ret), the squadron's first commanding officer. "This is a tough assignment to say goodbye to something so special. This is not a burial, but a wake and a celebration of life."

The squadron's mission was to support the Marine Air-Ground Task Force commander by conducting airborne electronic warfare, day or night, under all weather conditions during expeditionary, joint or combined operations.

"VMAQ-4 and its electronic warfare mission have a history of saving lives," said Anderst. "Each Marine that has ever served in VMAQ-4 has played a critical role in the defense of our nation."

The Seahawks have participated in Operation Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Inherent Resolve and also supported Marines in Korea and Vietnam.

"It's about the Marines on the parade deck, in the audience and the Marines who are no longer with us," said Lieutenant Colonel Paul K. Johnson, the commanding officer of VMAQ-4. "It is about every Marine who has ever worn our patch and called themselves a Seahawk."

In conjunction with the sundown of the Prowler airframe, the remaining Marine tactical electronic warfare squadrons will be deactivated by 2019.

"While we are sad at the loss of a machine," said Johnson. "The friends, brothers and sisters, squadron mates and Marines that make up this squadron will go on and that is what we celebrate today."

In the last two years, VMAQ-4 has supported two Red Flag exercises, two Weapons and Tactics Instructor courses, and a deployment to Turkey in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. VMAQ-4 was also recognized as the Marine Tacti-



CPL JASON JIMENEZ, USMC



CPL JASON JIMENEZ, USMC

At the official “sundown” deactivation ceremony for VMAQ-4, one of the Corps’ last remaining EA-6B Prowler squadrons, SgtMaj Alex Narvaez, left, and LtCol Paul K. Johnson case the squadron colors at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., June 2. Throughout the squadron’s 35-year history, its Marines and aircraft, pictured above during an October 2016 flyover, have supported operations around the world.

cal Electronic Warfare Squadron of the Year for 2016.

“We have finished at the top of our game,” said Johnson. “Ladies and gentlemen, for the last time . . . the Marines of VMAQ-4.”

Cpl Jason Jimenez, USMC

Illinois Town Unites to Support Montford Point Marines

In southern Illinois, a special community with a population of 250 is often referred to as “a small town with a rich history.”

The history referenced in the motto of Colp, Ill., comes in part from the town’s more than 400 men and women who have served in the military through the ages, and in some cases, made the ultimate sacrifice during times of war.

On May 27, the small community briefly saw its population increase by about 50 percent, when people from neighboring towns came to honor fallen servicemembers during the Colp Area Veterans Celebration, Dedication and Remembrance ceremony.

Two Marines with the 9th Marine Corps District stationed at Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill., were on hand to honor four local Montford Point Marines who were among the first African-Americans to serve in the Corps during World War II.

Nearly 20,000 African-Americans joined the Marine Corps in 1942 after President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a presidential directive giving African-Americans an opportunity to be recruited by the Marine Corps. They didn’t receive

recruit training at San Diego or Parris Island, but at Montford Point, N.C., a segregated training site.

The four Marines recognized were Sol Griffin Jr., James L. Kirby, Earl Taylor Jr. and Archibald Mosley. These Marines, among many other Montford Point Marines across the country, were previously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest award that can be given to a civilian by Congress, in 2012.

Mosley, who served in the Marine Corps from 1942 to 1946, is one of Colp’s two living Montford Point Marines. The other, Taylor, lives in Detroit but was in attendance to accept a Congressional Gold Medal plaque created by local townspeople.

Despite what Mosley described as a “physical sacrifice” to get into a vehicle due to his ailing legs, the 93-year-old, who lives in Nashville, Tenn., made the three-hour trip with one of his daughters so he could tell the story of the Montford Point Marines.



GYSGT BRYAN PETERSON, USMC

Sgt Mike Stachowski greets Montford Point Marine Archibald Mosley at the Colp Area Veterans Celebration, Dedication and Remembrance ceremony in Colp, Ill., May 27. The ceremony honored fallen servicemembers as well as the Montford Point Marines who call the small town “home.”

He also said he was told that Marines would be there, and he “would not miss it for the world.”

“I wasn’t disappointed,” the grinning Marine said. “As soon as I got in my wheelchair, the first people I saw were two Marines in dress blues. They reminded me of myself back then—skinny and lean. But, I can’t wear it [my uniform] anymore, which is why it’s great those Marines still can—to keep the Corps looking good!”

During the ceremony, multiple speakers, many of whom are veterans, described the importance of remembering the sacrifices of the fallen. Jim Gentile, a local man who believes in giving back to the military, spearheaded the event.

While going through their initial training, Mosley and other black Marines endured more hardships than other recruits such as not getting hot showers and living in cardboard shacks.

“Those were some bad, horrible times; things I would never wish on my worst enemy,” Mosley said. “But one place racism never was present was in battle.”

Mosley, along with more than 10,000 other Montford Point Marines, went on to serve in battles like Iwo Jima and Okinawa, and their admirable performance helped enable them to serve in later wars like Korea and Vietnam.

“It’s been said before, but bullets don’t have names, races or religions written on them,” said Mosley. “It has one objective and that is to kill whoever is not on their side. We fought together against a common enemy.”

Sergeant Mike Stachowski and Lance Corporal Jake Lamb were able to hand-

deliver the Congressional Gold Medal mementos to Mosley and to the families of the other recipients. In addition to the plaques, the Marines placed a wreath in front of a sign bearing the names of the town’s servicemembers.

Sgt Stachowski said that he and Lamb were honored to be part of an event that gives the Montford Point Marines the recognition they deserve.

“One of the things about the Marine Corps that keeps me going is how we remember those who came before us,” Stachowski added. “Marines like Mosley and other Montford Point Marines we are honoring today are the reason why the Corps is and always will be strong.”

“I was very happy to be a part of this,” LCpl Lamb said. “I have only been in the Marine Corps just short of two years and this is something I’ll remember having been a part of.”

Mosley said his presence at the ceremony was not about him, but about all people who have passed away fighting for the nation and for those who the country didn’t value equally at the time.

“I am in no way regretful for my time, sacrifice and service to the Marine Corps—I am very proud for what I did,” Mosley said. “But I am a preacher and I always preach that we don’t hold grudges, that there should be no malice in our hearts for others. I am just grateful, even though it took a long time, for the people in Washington, D.C., to finally recognize our efforts for our country. I am just glad more people know about us and am very proud to represent all Montford Point Marines.”

GYSgt Bryan Peterson, USMC

“The President’s Own” Welcomes First Female Assistant Drum Major

This summer, Gunnery Sergeant Stacie Crowther made Corps history as the first female assistant drum major for “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band. Crowther auditioned for and won the position in the fall of 2016 and reported for duty in March.

During the audition, four candidates from various Marine Corps bands spent several hours with Master Sergeant Duane King, the drum major, and GySgt Steven Williams, the outgoing assistant drum major, to learn different marching and mace techniques used at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C.

On the first day of auditions, the candidates led the Marine Band in the Friday Evening Parade Pass in Review sequence. The following day, the candidates conducted the band in several selections to include “Honors,” the national anthem, a foreign anthem and a march. The candidates also interviewed with the directors and leaders of the Marine Band.

As assistant drum major, Crowther now leads the band in ceremonial commitments, and as the company gunnery sergeant, she will be responsible for unit and new member training. Following her tour with the Marine Band, she will return to the operating forces.

“I am excited for new doors to open and that history is being made,” said Crowther. “But at the same time, I’ll be responsible for the same job those before me have done, male or female. It’s an absolute honor being at Marine Barracks Washington. I’m still walking around asking myself if this is for real!”

“It’s a pleasure to have GySgt Crowther here with ‘The President’s Own’ as the first female assistant drum major in our history,” said MSgt King. “Regardless of gender, she is one of the finest drum majors the Corps has to offer ... her talent and experience will be of great benefit to the organization.”

Crowther joined the Marine Corps at the urging of her mother. “She’d tell me, ‘You need to call the Navy band,’ almost every day. When I started my senior year in 1998, Marine recruiters were at my [high] school during lunch so I went up and looked at the musician pamphlet. There was a Marine there who was on recruiter’s assistance and was a flute player in one of the fleet bands. She said I could come up to the office and play for her and she’d tell me what I might need to work on if I decided to audition. The rest is history.”

She realized 10 years into her Marine Corps career that she wanted to be a drum major. “The extent of being in front of a

band for me was having everybody play some chords and get a pitch before a performance or two,” she explained. “But in the Unit Leader Course you learn ceremonial conducting and drum majoring, among other things. Once we started spinning the mace, I wanted to get better; I’d never touched a mace before. When the day finally came for me to lead a band on the march, I knew I wanted to be a drum major. The wall of sound behind me was incredible, and I couldn’t believe I was the one in front.”

Now, Crowther has grown accustomed to leading bands in parades and ceremonial events. She led Marine Corps Band New Orleans in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Downtown Parade which was watched by an audience of more than a million people. She said her favorite experience was leading Marine Corps Band New Orleans through the Superdome at the Krewe of Endymion Mardi Gras Ball.

“The band had just finished marching about 6 miles in roughly four hours and we got to the Superdome for the Parade of Bands. We went in, the spotlight came up



GYSGT RACHEL GHADIALI, USMC

GySgt Stacie Crowther, “The President’s Own” United States Marine Band’s first female assistant drum major, leads the band during a parade rehearsal at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., May 26.

and the roar of the audience was amazing. I’ve never experienced anything like it!”

While she is no stranger to marching parades and leading Marines, there are challenges that accompany her position as the Marine Band’s first female drum major.

“I anticipate some growing pains with having a much less tall person up front,” she said. Marching with a sword will be new for her, and there are uniform, marching and mace differences. “The uniforms will be totally different with the biggest change being the Bearskin. I’m still working on different ways to wear my hair under there,” Crowther added.

“But more than anything, I’m looking forward to being out on the deck with the elite,” she said.

The Evening Parade at Marine Barracks Washington takes place on Friday nights at 8:45 p.m. through Aug. 25. The parades are free; however, reservations are recommended. Please visit www.barracks.marines.mil for more information.

GySgt Rachel Ghadiali, USMC



Crazy Caption Contest

Winner



CPL DEMETRIUS MORGAN, USMC

“Hey, you with the ears like fenders! Can’t you hear me? You’re number 10.”

Submitted by
William D. Sherwood
Bushnell, Fla.

This Month’s Photo



LCPL COLBY COOPER, USMC

(Caption) _____

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____ ZIP _____

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

From Simple Bags With Straps to Load-Bearing Systems ... The Evolution of the Pack

By CWO-4 Randy Gaddo,
USMC (Ret)

“The [soldier’s] load is the greatest of all drags upon mobility in combat. ... It comes mainly of the failure of armies and those who control their doctrine to look into the problem. A decisive decrease in that load is possible, once we recognize that our use of the machine can be accommodated to this end,” wrote Army Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall in 1949.

When Marines go into a combat zone, it is essential that they take all the equipment and supplies they’ll need for extended operations—but it also is essential that they can effectively carry their equipment and supplies into combat without debilitating fatigue.

The field packs that Marines carry today are the result of an ever-evolving process to provide load-bearing packs with which Marines can carry more weight with less effort. As modern Marines strap on their packs, they may not realize that there was a time when Marine packs were simply bags with straps.

“If you look at historical pack designs, until we got into World War I, the concept

of the basic pack design hadn’t changed much,” said Gunnery Sergeant Tom Williams, USMC (Ret), who founded the United States Marine Corps Historical Company, a nationwide nonprofit organization that directly supports the Marine Corps and the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation with educational outreach programs and historically accurate uniforms and equipment. “You basically had two straps to go over your shoulders and a bag or series of bags with flaps to hold the contents,” said GySgt Williams.

Continental Marines operated without standardized equipment requirements and often would go into battle carrying items brought from home. As a result, Marines carried weapons, ammunition and supplies on their bodies or in whatever type of bag or pack they could scrounge. Photos and drawings of early Marines in the field display bags of numerous types, sizes and descriptions dangling from their shoulders or waists.

The two most common packs used by Americans were of European design. France and England boasted the premiere military forces of the day, so American pack systems tended to emulate their patterns.



COURTESY OF THE COLONEL CHARLES H. WATERHOUSE ESTATE, ART COLLECTION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

In this painting by Col Charles Waterhouse, a Continental Marine carries his sling pack and haversack.



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COURTESY OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL COMPANY

Inset: Modeled after a European design, the 1809 Lherbette pattern knapsack was similar to the Army’s pack but was painted navy blue and red.

Left: The contents of the Lherbette knapsack included a blanket, personal hygiene items, spare clothing and other personal effects.

“The most common packs the early American military used were double-bagged folding knapsacks with a single leather sling worn over one shoulder or a more conventional pack with two shoulder straps,” said GySgt Williams. Both packs could carry items such as a blanket, spare clothing, hygiene items and personal effects. During most of the 1800s, mess gear, rations and immediately needed items were carried in a separate cloth bag called a haversack, which was slung over the shoulder or worn around the waist

Continental Marines were disbanded in 1783 after the Revolutionary War, and the U.S. Marines were reestablished by an act of Congress in 1798 after 15 years of broken service. They were uniformed and equipped with castoffs of the dissolved Legion of the United States, an American military force that served as an all-purpose, combined-arms force from 1792-1796. This re-establishment prompted changes to equipment and standards.

“Starting in 1805, after the Tripoli era, you see first the Army and then the Marine Corps move [toward] a standardized equipment system,” said Williams, referring to the era in the late 1700s and early 1800s when Marines were fighting the Barbary pirates. “People have a tendency to correlate uniform changes with equipment changes, but that isn’t necessarily the case. Even though the Marine Corps went through uniform changes in 1805, 1818, 1822, 1833 and 1840, equipment design, including packs, was much slower.”

In 1809, Marines adopted a standardized pack called the “Lherbette” (pronounced LER BET) knapsack. This version was modeled after European design. It was simply a rectangular canvas bag with two leather shoulder straps and a flap secured by three straps covering one central pocket. The flap and body were waterproofed with paint. The Marine pack differed from the light blue Army pack only in color—the Marine pack was painted dark blue with a red border.

“During this time period and into the War of 1812, Marines were not issued haversacks to carry rations or canteens for water,” GySgt Williams explained. “The Navy reasoned that Marines’ traditional duty as guards aboard ships or in barracks negated the need because food and water was readily available.” Historians believe



The haversack normally was used to carry rations, mess gear and personal items such as a pipe and tobacco.



A Marine detachment boards a transport bound for the Caribbean in 1913 still wearing the 1878-1904 pattern pack and haversack.

that each Marine, like their Navy counterparts, also received a seabag for transporting and storing personal and uniform items when aboard ship.

Marines continued using the Lherbette pack through the Seminole Wars. In 1840, Marines again followed the Army’s lead

and adopted a new pack. “The 1839 black, soft pack with russet leather straps and white painted ‘USM’ inside a white oval on the back came in to replace the Lherbette,” said GySgt Williams. The pack was made of black painted or “tarred” canvas. For uncertain reasons, the packs were seldom

“Starting in 1805, after the Tripoli era, you see first the Army and then the Marine Corps move [toward] a standardized equipment system.”—GySgt Tom Williams, USMC (Ret)

As the 20th century dawned, the concept of military pack systems that boosted capacity and balance, improved ease of use, and offered the ability to scale up or down to suit the mission began to emerge.



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The blanket bag contained (clockwise): roll straps, blanket, rubber blanket, shelter half with pole, pegs and rope and personal hygiene items.

used in the field after the Mexican War in 1846-1848.

As a field expedient, Marines often used their issued blankets as packs. Marines formed the blankets into long rolls, tied the ends together, and wrapped immediately needed items inside the roll. In lieu of a pack during a march, Marines carried these improvised packs slung over their shoulders simply because they were more comfortable to carry.

The 1839 pack was supposed to be replaced by a newer French pattern pack in 1859, but the switch never happened.

The 1839 pack stayed in use until post-1875 and eventually was replaced with the blanket bag pack system.

The Marine M1881 pack, referred to as the "1878 blanket bag," was the same as the Army model of 1878 and was used by Marines through the Spanish-American War in 1898. "It was basically a large rectangular cotton canvas bag with a flap emblazoned with USMC and leather straps for carrying over the shoulder," said GySgt Williams. Load support was not much of a consideration at the time, and this represented the first attempt to improve the

load capacity and ease of donning packs. While the pack was an improvement, the standard configuration of this version still did little to adequately distribute the load when worn in the field.

In addition to a standard military blanket, rubber blanket, shelter half with pole, pegs and rope, the blanket bag had a small internal compartment stitched into the top for toiletries and personal items. Although this pack would continue to be issued to Marines until just prior to WW I, it was still common for Marines to replace the pack with a blanket roll made up of their blanket and shelter half.

As the 20th century dawned, the concept of military pack systems that boosted capacity and balance, improved ease of use, and offered the ability to scale up or down to suit the mission began to emerge.

The U.S. Army introduced a full revision of military equipment in 1910, including a newly designed pack system that varied greatly from previous designs. In 1912, the Marines began developing their own version of this system, and over the next five years, "782 gear" became the state-of-the-art pack design. The now-familiar term "782 gear" referred to the Marine Corps issue form 782B, listing required individual Marine equipment.

The pack, or haversack, was the core item in this new system. With the advent of the M1910 system, the term "haversack" was used to describe the bag as part of a scalable pack system rather than a separate bag of previous eras. It served a similar but expanded role.

Radiating from a central bag, the pack's contents were held by flaps secured with a series of straps and buckles. A detachable, triangular "pack tail" could be laced into the bottom of the pack with a leather strap. The tail contained the rolled blanket, shelter half and tent poles and could be detached if necessary to separate the upper "light marching" pack. An entrenching tool could be strapped onto the outside of the pack. An ammunition belt could be attached using a series of straps and hooks, keeping the equipment together and distributing the weight more evenly.

While the M1910 system was a leap forward in conceptual human load-bearing technology, there were still many problems that became apparent in the reality of the field.

"By 1940, the shortcomings of the M1910



A Marine gun crew at Belleau Wood in 1918 (above) is shown carrying the M1910 pattern pack and 782 gear. The haversack (right) was part of a pack system. The contents of the pack were contained by flaps that were secured by straps and buckles. (Photos courtesy of the United States Marine Corps Historical Company)

pack had become apparent to a number of Marine officers,” wrote Walter Bradford in the *Military Collector & Historian* spring 2006 publication. “One of them, then-Lieutenant Colonel Alfred H. Noble, commanding officer of 5th Marines, issued a Regimental Special Order detailing three senior noncommissioned officers in the regiment to a special board which he convened to design a new pack system.

“There is a great need of an infantry pack that will carry all of the clothing and equipment now prescribed for the present pack and at the same time provide an easier load on the man,” wrote Noble in the second paragraph of the order. This need eventually led to the development of the iconic M1941 system.

In an October 1940 letter entitled, “The Experimental Pack” in *Leatherneck* magazine, Captain Robert W. Gordon, USMC said of the 1941 system, “To say that this new pack is an improvement is a rank understatement. Any recruit who has struggled with the intricacies of the present pack will agree that almost anything would improve the old pack, especially losing it.”

“The 1910 system wasn’t effective because it was not really a pack,” confirmed GySgt Williams. “The concept was good but the application in the field just didn’t work. For one thing, the haversack was being asked to do too many things. It was this series of flaps so if it wasn’t packed correctly, equipment could fall out. Plus,



it had to be completely unpacked to get at certain items.”

“We all know how difficult it is to bivouac with the present pack, which must be completely opened, thus fully exposing the contents to the weather and inviting loss of small articles. The new [1941] pack works like a pocket. One may reach in and get what he wants at any time ... without having to repack the whole shebang,” according to Gordon’s article.

GySgt Williams also pointed out that the triangular tail section essentially was a piece of canvas with a leather strap that laced through eyelets. In theory, once a Marine was ready to go into combat, he could grab the strap, pull it out and drop the unneeded gear. In practice, it failed to work as designed.

“Theoretically, one is supposed to detach the present main pack while on the march by unlacing the two-ended leather



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During WW II, Marines on Iwo Jima advance carrying the M1941 field transport pack. This pack was designed to be used in traveling by rail, ship or other modes of transport when blankets were needed.

Marines on Saipan during WW II also used the M1941 pack system in its transport mode, including the haversack and knapsack.

The M1941 haversack was designed to carry items that would be needed during a landing operation including a rain poncho, eating utensils and personal items.



COURTESY OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL COMPANY

strap, thus leaving the combat pack in place,” wrote Capt Gordon in 1940. “Try and do it! Everyone knows that one must unsling the pack, climb upon it with a knee ... and break several fingernails and a promise not to swear before the ... thing will come loose.”

The senior noncommissioned officers appointed to design a new pack in 1940 proved yet again that “Old Breed” staff noncommissioned officers can tackle any

mission. Bradford wrote that the new design, including a prototype fabricated by another staff NCO, was completed in a matter of days. “It was a true departure from the M1910 pack in that it reverted to the basic style of the pre-1910 pack and that it separated the load into two distinct packs,” he noted.

The upper of the two packs was a khaki canvas “haversack” with a flap to carry rations, eating utensils and immediate

need items such as socks and a poncho, which essentially became the assault pack. A knapsack with one strap threading through two flat rings to hook under the haversack was used to carry spare clothing. A rolled shelter half and blanket, including tent pegs, poles and guy line was draped in a horseshoe shape over the top and two sides of the system.

The prototype proved effective and after a few modifications, it became the new



The ALICE pack was officially adopted by the Marine Corps in 1973 and was designed as a two-component system. (Photo courtesy of the United States Marine Corps Historical Company)

M1941 pack system. When worn as a complete system, it was referred to as the “field transport” pack. The system was adaptable to several different versions depending on the mission and circumstances.

The system was effective enough to be carried by Marines throughout World War II, the Korean War, and even into Vietnam. In fact, in a historical turnabout, according to Bradford, the design influenced the Army’s M1945 field and cargo pack system.

In the mid-1970s, the venerable 1941 pack system was replaced with the ALICE (All-Purpose Lightweight Individual Carrying Equipment) pack. The Army fielded early versions of the ALICE pack in the mid-1950s; however, the Marine Corps was able to stay with the 1941 system because it was already in production and was more cost-effective as a result. Marines officially accepted the ALICE pack in 1973.

The ALICE pack had one large central compartment that closed on top with a drawstring and included three separate, but attached, outside pockets with adjustable strap and buckle closures with snap fasteners for quick access. It could be used with or without a metal field pack frame with an attached waist belt that was intended to keep the pack from flopping when on a march or during maneuvers. The material of the entire pack was comprised of a drab green, water-repellant nylon and included webbing with canvas fabric straps.



Above: 25 years after its inception during WW II, Marines still carried the M1941 pack system during Operation Valiant Hunt in Vietnam.

Inset: LCpl Ben Reed of “Kilo” Company, 3/9 hauled his gear with the M1941 pack during the Vietnam War in 1969.

In June 1985, George P. Fenton wrote in *Marine Corps Gazette*, “Most Marines find it most cumbersome to attack with their ALICE packs on their backs. Although a butt-pack is not found in the Marine Corps supply system, such items are often found in the field strapped to the waist of U.S. Marines. It ought to be an essential piece of 782 gear. With this pack, the Marine is able to carry a poncho, two MREs, a sleeping shirt, an extra pair of socks, and a pyrotechnic. With a min-



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It became the new M1941 pack system. When worn as a complete system, it was referred to as the “field transport” pack. The system was adaptable to several different versions depending on the mission and circumstances.



CHRIS LAWSON

In September 1998, *Leatherneck* featured an article about the Corps' new MOLLE field pack.



COURTESY OF THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL COMPANY

Introduced in 2011, the FILBE pack is the latest load-bearing equipment to be used by Marines.

imum load of personal items, the Marine should be able to effectively shoot and move and still carry his prescribed load of munitions. The ALICE pack and all other accompanying issue items should not be carried. When preparing to engage in offensive maneuver, these items should be made part of the logistics train, to be brought forward only when time and the situation permit. It is better for Marines to suffer a little bit of cold and discomfort than to risk that they will become ex-

“Today, the load Marines are bearing going into operations is simply much heavier than their predecessors.”

—GySgt Tom Williams, USMC (Ret)

hausted in battle from carrying too heavy a load.”

When the ALICE pack was loaded with every item a Marine needed for an extended operation, it weighed 100 pounds or more. Since there was no detachable “knapsack,” it was an all-or-nothing loading system. For better or worse, the ALICE pack stayed in the system for nearly a quarter of a century. Subsequently, the MOLLE pack (Modular Lightweight Load-Carrying Equipment) was introduced in 1997. Pronounced like the name “Molly,” the MOLLE concept was a total redesign based roughly on civilian hiking gear.

The four-part modular system consisted of a main pack and a patrol pack that was also compatible with a butt pack, frame and load-bearing vest, and included a padded waist belt that was touted as a major feature. It came with a variety of pouches and pockets and even a hydration bladder, enabling it to be configured in many different ways to suit the mission. Marine veteran and *Leatherneck* magazine writer Chris Lawson noted in a September 1998 article that, “by utilizing the robust waist belt—something the ALICE pack did not have—the MOLLE is designed to be more comfortable and help reduce fatigue.”

These new comfort and efficiency improvements, plus the pack’s ability to change and adapt to mission requirements, should have meant that Marines had finally found the perfect system; however, according to GySgt Williams, its extreme adaptability was perhaps, arguably, its downfall. “It was an abysmal failure,” he explained. “First, the ‘unbreakable’ plastic frame did not stand up to the lance corporal-in-the-field test; it broke. Additionally, it turned out to be too complicated to use and did not hold up to expectations. They actually had to issue a VHS instruction tape with it to try and explain how to use it,” he noted.

Marines routinely stepped off helicopters in Afghanistan carrying 120 pounds or more in each MOLLE pack. “Even with the next-generation MOLLEs, which had a detachable daypack, it was still relying on Marines carrying too much ... today, the load Marines are bearing going into operations is simply much heavier than their predecessors,” said GySgt Williams.

Less than 10 years later in 2004, Ma-

rines introduced the ILBE (Improved Load Bearing Equipment) Packs to replace the MOLLEs. The ILBE was specifically manufactured for Marines as a durable, lightweight system. Designed to carry a load of up to 120 pounds, it distributed the load to improve comfort. The high-tenacity nylon hybrid yarn material improved durability.

Taking a cue from its ancestral 1941 model, the ILBE had a main pack and a detachable assault pack. Unlike its distant kin, the ILBE also had a 3-litre water reservoir. This version was the first pack to be offered in Marine Pattern Camouflage and featured the PALS (Pouch Attachment Ladder System) for attaching smaller modular pouches.

Today’s Marines primarily use the FILBE (Family of Improved Load-Bearing Equipment), which was introduced in 2011. While the FILBE equipment is reportedly effective in its load-bearing role, it fails to integrate seamlessly with contemporary body armor systems. The packs were designed and implemented before the enhanced systems of body armor were developed based on current operational needs and are therefore incompatible.

“I think the FILBE denotes an improvement in the system to improve equipment,” GySgt Williams said. “The Marine Corps listened to what the troops in the field were telling them and came up with a system similar to the M1941, where it is a family of equipment that you can scale up or down to meet the mission at hand.”

The never-ending process to improve load-bearing systems for Marines continues.

Given the robust history of pack innovation, future pack redesigns are likely forthcoming as more testing to simulate real-world conditions continues.

As GySgt Williams said, half-joking, “Give it to a lance corporal in the field. ... if he doesn’t break it, you should be good to go.”

Author’s bio: CWO-4 Randy Gaddo, USMC (Ret), was a combat correspondent as an enlisted Marine and later a public affairs officer. He retired from active duty in 1996 and now operates his own writing-based business, RGCommunications, and is a freelance photojournalist.



Books Reviewed

TERMINAL IMPACT. By Chief Warrant Officer Charles Henderson, USMC (Ret). Published by Penguin Publishing Group. 464 pages. \$24.30 MCA Members. \$27 Regular Price.

“Terminal Impact” is a spirited novel set during the Gulf War. The protagonist is a Marine scout sniper, Corporal Jack Valentine. Cpl Valentine’s first kill during Desert Storm was when he shot an Iraqi general emerging from a Republican Guard headquarters building. “One shot, one kill,” Jack smiled. “That’s what Gunnery Sergeant Carlos Hathcock always taught his snipers. Right? One shot, one kill.”

Chief Warrant Officer Charles Henderson’s first book, “Marine Sniper: 93 Confirmed Kills,” details the amazing story of Gunny Hathcock, a successful Vietnam War sniper. Henderson’s second novel, “Silent Warrior: The Marine Sniper’s Story Vietnam Continues,” focused on the art and science of the modern military sniper. Henderson knows his subject.

Valentine, the book’s protagonist, serves as a member of an elite team operating during the South American drug wars. He returns to Iraq in 2006. The newest high-ranking villain is a Sunni Muslim named Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Zarqawi leads a blood-and-torture campaign that targets not only westerners, but also Shia Muslims. Zarqawi quickly becomes a man marked for elimination.

Using his M440A3 sniper rifle, Valentine takes a near impossible shot at Zarqawi from a hilltop more than 1,500 meters away, but misses. Round one goes to the insurrectionist.

As time passes, the enemy becomes aware of the growing threat of Valentine’s new scout/sniper team and labels him the “Ghost of Al Anbar.” The gunny and his team of scout/snipers continue to strike fear into Zarqawi’s followers. However, internal tensions soon arise between the Marines and members of the contract mercenaries working for the Malone-Leyva Corporation.

Valentine’s Marines also face another noted enemy sniper known as Juba, the “Phantom of Baghdad.”

Lieutenant Colonel Snow, Valentine’s boss, is a highly religious Marine with no

real malice toward anyone. “Kill ’em but don’t hate ’em. And just kill the ones that need killing.” Valentine and the officer often compare and contrast their views on their work as it related to God and the hereafter.

Valentine and his team are dispatched on a special mission in northeast Al Anbar Province. They’ll be scouting the territory ahead for a planned sweep by First Battalion, Fifth Marines. For the next two weeks his team will sleep on rocks and live in the desert wastelands. In a major snafu, the highly classified plans for the operation fall into the hands of the double-dealing Malone-Leyva head contractor.



This guy knowingly feeds his al-Qaida contacts the plans for the operation. Valentine’s team, now totally compromised, gets ambushed with disastrous results. Fighting for their lives, the team is rescued, but in their fighting withdrawal, Valentine is left behind as he covers his team’s withdrawal. In another major screw-up, the enemy learns the identity of the missing Marine. The race is on; will the enemy capture and execute the high profile “Ghost

of Al Anbar” before he can be rescued? Will the expert training of this badass Para-Frog, Scout-Sniper Force Recon hard baked Marine meet the challenge in the dangerous and unforgiving Iraqi badlands? Additionally, the committed reader will find out just what happens to the Sunni monster Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

Henderson’s fine novel is a testament to the schooling, skills and morality of our highly trained special operations community.

Marshaling his skills as a gifted novelist, Henderson points his accusing finger at the dysfunctional nature of our professionally restrained and ethical military operators in vivid contrast with the wild-west tactics of the modern-day corporate hired guns. The novel allows the reader an unfiltered glimpse into their specialized, one might even say, “mind-blowing” world of a scout sniper. The reader gains a vivid glimpse through the sniper’s M82A3 SASR, Special Application Scope Rifle: “If they run, they die tired.” These men, our professional special operation forces, endure countless privations and overcome mounting hardships as they skillfully

complete the assigned missions. On top of it all, these gifted warriors continue to face many difficult decisions as they righteously carry out their dangerous operations.

Bob Loring

Author’s bio: Readers will recognize Marine veteran “Red Bob” Loring as a frequent Leatherneck reviewer, who has had more than 100 book reviews published in the magazine.

HILLBILLY ELEGY: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis. By J.D. Vance. Published by HarperCollins. 272 pages. \$15.30 MCA Member. \$16.99 Regular Price.

J.D. Vance’s book “Hillbilly Elogy,” a vivid description of the cultural background and downward spiral of the economy in the region from which he emerged, will be familiar to many other Marines who joined the Marine Corps to escape a rotten hometown or dysfunctional family.

Following World War II, Vance’s grandparents moved north from Kentucky’s Appalachian region to Middletown, Ohio, a factory town in the so-called Rust Belt, midway between Cincinnati and Dayton. Over many years and generations, Vance’s family maintained a tried and true feudin’ fightin’ and fussin’ lifestyle, still clinging to their roots in Kentucky. Nearly the entire family struggled profoundly with the demands of life and were never able to fully escape the legacy of drug abuse, alcoholism, poverty and trauma so characteristic of their part of America.

Vance offers a personal account of growing up in—and leaving—an impoverished white working-class community experiencing social and economic crisis. Vance eventually followed the sound advice of his cousin Rachael, who was a Marine veteran. She told him that the Marines would “whip your ass into shape.” Vance was not yet ready for college, even after completing the entrance forms, and knew his family didn’t have enough money to pay for his degree. He also believed that his country needed him (Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom had just begun). So, after thinking it all over, he visited the local military recruiting office and spoke with a Marine recruiter.

A major life-altering component of his Marine Corps experience remains in him and acts as a “moral compass.” From his first day of boot camp at Parris Island,

until his last day on active duty, when he grabbed his discharge papers and sped home, the Marine Corps, as he puts it, “taught me how to live like an adult.”

“The Marine Corps demanded that I think strategically about how to make decisions. And then taught me how to do so. Just as important,” Vance recalls, “the Marines changed the expectations that I had for myself.”

After four years, he discovered how to earn that respect and watched men and women of vastly different social classes and races work together as a team and bond like family.

Vance served in a public affairs MOS in the Corps, and, while in Iraq, he was assigned primarily to escort reporters. He also took photos and wrote stories. He often was attached to a civil affairs unit whose mission would be to accomplish community outreach tasks. When Vance returned to the States, he was ordered to the public affairs office at the Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, N.C.

At first, he felt as if the Marine Corps “threw me to the wolves,” as he was sent out to brief television reporters about an

incident on base. “I struggled a bit,” he says, “allowing some photographers to take photos of a classified aircraft and speaking out of turn at a meeting with senior officers.”

Not to be deterred, Vance learned from his mistakes, building solid relationships with the press, staying on message during interviews, and managing his time. Some excellent and timely mentoring by senior officers didn’t hurt either.

According to Vance, “I couldn’t possibly see how destructive that Middletown mentality was until I escaped it. The Marine Corps replaced it with something else, something that loathes excuses.” “Giving it all” was a catchphrase, something heard in health and gym class. “In

the Marine Corps, giving it your all was a way of life.”

And how did Vance sum up his four years in the Marines? “It was the Marines Corps that first gave me an opportunity to truly fail, made me take that opportunity, and then, when I did fail, gave me another chance anyway.”

And where is Vance now? After being honorably discharged from the Marine

Corps, and completing his undergraduate studies at Ohio State (in two years), he then attended law school at Yale, and was awarded his Doctor of Jurisprudence degree. After working at a law firm for a while, he ran a neuroscience-focused biotechnology company. Then he joined Revolution LLC, a Washington, D.C.-based investment firm co-founded by AOL founder Steve Case and Washington Capitals owner Ted Leonsis. Not too shabby.

This book delivers a likeable story about Vance’s triumph over his hardscrabble upbringing with the help of gumption and familial loving kindness. The “elegy” in the title commands: Don’t dare crack a smile when you’re talking about this place. The institutional voice of the writer’s “hillbilly” region of the country may very well belong to J.D. Vance for now, but it also fits into a larger narrative about political resentment and up-by-one’s-bootstraps redemption.

Mag Fred C. Lash, USMC (Ret)

Author’s bio: Fred C. Lash is a retired Marine Corps and U.S. Department of State public affairs officer, and is a frequent contributor to both Leatherneck and Marine Corps Gazette.

THE COLORS OF WAR: THE PACIFIC (DVD). Available through Amazon.com. \$9.99.

Betio, an island of the Tarawa Atoll, November 1943.

“... Marine! Get on the ground with that camera before the Jap[anese] shoot your ass off!” hollered the crouching lieutenant of the Second Marine Division as sporadic automatic fire from a two-story concrete barracks pinged and peppered the battle wreckage around the feet of the unflinching combat photographer.

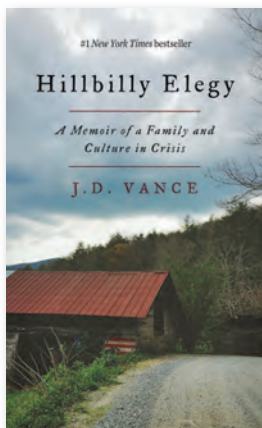
Clutching his hand-cranked Bell & Howell Filmo-Eyemo motion-picture cameras, Staff Sergeant Norman Hatch continued filming the howitzers, two light tanks, and a cannon-carrying amtrac.

Finally, the cameraman, turning, shouted defiantly, “Can’t take pictures lying down!”

Such was the war attitude toward the dangers of war in the Pacific by American combat photographers.

Later that afternoon, creeping stealthily around cratered or abandoned pillboxes and underground fortifications while under sniper fire, Hatch came upon a Marine company fighting atop a huge sand-covered, steel-reinforced, blockhouse that housed the command of the Imperial Japanese Navy. About to stand to film the dramatic scene, a Marine, slightly forward, yelled, “Here they come, boys, running hell-bent!”

Indeed, two squads of Japanese sailors,




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some unarmed, dashed through the embrasure of the sand protected fortress into a narrow egress. Exposing himself to enemy fire, Hatch, without hesitation, recorded on film the slaughter of the fleeing seamen. That evening, with Betio virtually secure, he wrote to his young wife, Lois: "Well, darling sweet stuff, I've been through it all and there's not so much a scratch on me. I was in the first wave to land and methinks I have some good pictures."

Really? By imperiling himself to shoot the footage at that moment, he captured the only still or motion picture of Japanese and American combatants trying to kill each other in the same frames.

Hatch's sequence was used in the color documentary, "With the Marines at Tarawa," the winner of the 1944 Academy Award for Best Documentary, Short Subject. Over three days, from start to finish, he filmed and filmed. Later, Hatch would feel guilty that he didn't suffer a scratch while two of his "camera brothers" were killed.

Today, military buffs and enthusiasts, professional or not, can purchase the

classic, "With the Marines at Tarawa," along with five additional rarely seen combat documentaries at minimal cost. "The Colors Of War" (157 minutes, 2001) is available on Amazon.com; the DVD not only contains, "With the Marines At Tarawa," but also "Report From the Aleutians" (directed by John Huston, 1943); "The Battle of Midway" (John Ford, 1942); "To the Shores of Iwo Jima" (Milton Sperling, 1945); "The Battle of Kwajalein," and "Iwo Jima Interview" (featuring Joe Rosenthal). Producer-owner Kit Parker of legendary Kit Parker Films arranged for veterans who fought in the actual battles to replace the official narrations with their own commentaries.



Norm Hatch, who died on

April 22 at the age of 96, helped pioneer the new art of combat cinematography: focus upon filming the entire event from the opening sequence to its natural conclusion, regardless of the length of time needed; show American dead, regardless of the emotional cost; convince the public that it must see the action in order to intuitively understand it; while filming battle actions, always include, when pos-

sible, the clouds of smoke, the faces of the fighters, (before, during, and after), the shouts for corpsmen, the noises of battle, and the incidental but powerful footage, i.e., a dead sniper dangling from a tree because he tied himself to the branches, a flying helmet shot off the head of a Marine from an enemy hiding underground. And always challenge yourself and fellow cameramen to film better and better shots, scenes, and sequences.

America's premier directors, John Ford, George Stevens, John Huston, William Wyler and Frank Capra, also served by filming their own minor epics but it was Norm Hatch, standing up holding his little 12-pound, handheld camera, usually being bombed, mortared, strafed, and shot at, who set the standard for combat photography.

Don DeNevi

Author's bio: Don DeNevi has authored a number of World War II non-fiction titles, several focusing upon homefront activities. His first venture into historical fiction is the recently published, "Faithful Shep—The Story of A Hero Dog and the Nine Texas Rangers Who Saved Him" released in the past two months.



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Inspired By A Legend:

Marine's Origami Project Makes An Impact



SGT BRITTNEYVELLA, USMC



LCPL KELSEY DORNFELD, USMC

An elderly woman at a nursing home in Kin, Okinawa, holds a crane given to her by SSgt Esconde on Nov. 25, 2016. Esconde has presented thousands of cranes to hospitals and nursing homes as a way of spreading goodwill.

Story by Sgt Brittney Vella, USMC

A Hawaii-based Marine has taken it upon himself to use a unique hobby to make a difference in the lives of those around him—and it all was inspired by a Japanese legend.

“The Legend of 1,000 Cranes’ comes from the idea that if a person folds 1,000 cranes, their wish will be granted by the gods,” said Staff Sergeant Ismael Esconde, the substance abuse control officer for Headquarters & Service Company, Third

Battalion, Third Marine Regiment. “My goal is to spread the legend and make a positive impact on people in my own way.”

The legend dates back to the 1700s, but it became well-known in the 1950s when an 11-year-old Japanese girl named Sadako Sasaki was diagnosed with leukemia caused by radiation from the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. While in the hospital, she folded paper cranes, hoping it would help heal her.

Esconde, who deployed to Okinawa, Japan, in 2016, was inspired by Sasaki’s

story and thought he could put his origami hobby to good use during his time there. During his six-month deployment, he led the initiative to fold and donate 3,000 cranes to local hospitals and a nursing home.

He not only made an impact on the local people, but also passed on the craft of origami to other Marines.

“[He] has made a positive impact on me,” said Corporal Blake Smith, an administrative specialist with 3/3. “I joined the Marine Corps to help people, and he showed me that there are many different ways to do that. We need more staff non-commissioned officers to influence Ma-



FILE PHOTO

Sadako Sasaki, diagnosed with leukemia years after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, Aug. 6, 1945, began making paper cranes after being inspired by “The Legend of the 1,000 Cranes.” On Sept. 22, 2012, one of her original cranes was donated to the USS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii.

rines from both sides of the spectrum—as warfighters when we’re forward deployed, but also to be a good citizen while we are in garrison.”

Now that Esconde has returned to Hawaii, he continues to spread the Japanese legend.

“I recently donated 1,000 cranes to Hawaii United Okinawa Association,” Esconde said during an April interview. “They are going to use the cranes in June in honor of the Battle of Okinawa.”

Jane Fujie Serikaku, the executive director of the HUOA, accepted the donation from Esconde on April 18. She said his contribution underscores the

relationship between the HUOA and the Marine Corps.

In hope of making a positive impact on younger generations, Esconde has also supported local events such as the Armed Services YMCA and Marine Corps Community Services by teaching children about origami.

“Origami is a productive alternative for video games,” Esconde said. “It’s a great activity that encourages kids to use their imagination.”

Esconde has a little more than a year left in Hawaii and plans to continue educating other servicemembers, civilians and younger generations about Sasaki’s story.

SSgt Ismael Esconde, substance abuse control officer with H & S Co, 3/3, holds one of the cranes he folded, April 19, 2017. Esconde uses origami as a way to make a positive impact in the community. (Photo by Sgt Brittney Vella, USMC)

“The spirit which Esconde diligently folded each crane represents his heart and soul to personally make a difference in how the military is perceived in the community,” said Serikaku. “His understanding of the symbolism of cranes and how he has chosen to reach out to the hearts of others is truly admirable.”



Volunteers Improve Camp Pendleton Facilities

More than 350 volunteers from Home Depot's building materials departments and Habitat for Humanity conducted improvements on several facilities at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., June 7.

The volunteer work was part of an ongoing effort by Home Depot to improve the homes and lives of U.S. servicemembers and their families. Since 2011, the Home Depot Foundation has transformed more than 33,000 homes and facilities for veterans across the country.

"We all want to help out," said Chris Baiocchi, vice president of development for Habitat for Humanity of Orange County, Calif. "I think it's important for everyone to do what they can to help those who are serving."

Over the course of 3½ hours, the volunteers worked to upgrade the 13 Area guardhouse and K-9 training facilities and created six custom playhouses for children living aboard the installation. The volunteers were split into groups and each group was given a specific task.

Volunteers at the guardhouse renovated the living areas and kitchenette so that the Marines would be more comfortable. At the K-9 training facilities, the volunteers painted and repaired kennels and constructed a shaded area and obstacle course. The third group constructed the playhouses to provide an entertaining and enriching environment for children.

"I just want to thank the Home Depot Foundation and the Orange County Habitat for Humanity," said Colonel Roberta Shea, the commanding officer of I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group. "We are just so appreciative."

Sgt Hector de Jesus, USMC

DOD Launches Online Program For Survivors of Abuse, Assault

On June 12, the Defense Department launched an online and mobile educational program to help individuals begin to recover, heal and build resiliency after a sexual assault.

The self-guided program, called "Building Hope and Resiliency: Addressing the Effects of Sexual Assault," can be completed at the user's pace and features information about coping mechanisms, practical relaxation exercises, links to resources and referrals for ongoing support.

Research shows that some service-



SGT HECTOR DE JESUS, USMC

Volunteers from Habitat for Humanity and Home Depot stand with Marines from the K-9 facility at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., June 7. The group of more than 350 (above), painted and repaired kennels and constructed a new shade structure and obstacle courses at the facility. Volunteers (below) cut wood for benches as additional upgrades to the the K-9 project.



SGT HECTOR DE JESUS, USMC

members, including cadets and midshipmen, have experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault prior to joining the military. According to the DOD Fiscal Year 2016 Annual Report on Sexual Assault in the Military, approximately 10 percent, or 556 reports, of servicemember victim reports involved incidents that occurred prior to military service.

In order to support these individuals, the DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and

Response Office (SAPRO), via a contract with the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), developed and deployed this anonymous, self-guided educational program on the Safe Helpline.

Recognizing the impact that trauma can have on an individual, the program is part of a comprehensive effort to enhance individual and collective resilience and improve readiness across the department. Users can take a brief, optional self-assess-

ment to gauge the effectiveness of their current coping strategies and whether they may benefit from additional support and resources.

“Knowing there is a significant link between childhood sexual victimization and adult sexual re-victimization and health problems, we wanted to help servicemembers who experienced sexual assault prior to joining the military learn about topics like healthy relationships and coping strategies, and identify whether they would benefit from additional support and resources,” said Bette Inch, senior victim assistance advisor at SAPRO.

“Being able to access this tool anonymously and from the privacy of your own room through the SHL is key for many servicemembers,” Inch added.

As SAPRO and RAINN continue to seek ways to support survivors, innovative tools like Building Hope offer a safe, convenient and private way to empower individuals in their healing journey.

Members of the DOD community who have been affected by sexual assault can access confidential, anonymous support 24/7 through the DOD Safe Helpline at <https://safehelpline.org/> or by calling 877-995-5247.

Users can learn about and anonymously access the online program both on a computer and on a mobile device. To access the program, a user can visit the Building Hope page on the Safe Helpline website, <https://safehelpline.org/building-hope-and-resiliency>. The online program can also be accessed directly through the Safe Helpline mobile application. To learn more about the app and how to download it to your mobile device visit <https://www.safehelpline.org/about-mobile>.

DOD News

Command Financial Specialists Return to Units, Mentor Marines

“If you really want to have a true change in your life that will be impactful, understanding finances is huge,” said Anthony Green, a personal financial management specialist at Camp Foster, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, and instructor for the Command Financial Specialist (CFS) course. “It takes everything you work for and it pulls it in one direction, and in return your success rate increases.”

Sailors and Marines graduated from the 40-hour course designed for E-6 and above at Camp Foster, June 9.

“Once they acquire basic financial skills, it literally changes their lifestyle,” said Green. “The course is so effective because the three personal financial management specialists on island will not be the only ones teaching—they’ll

have the support of Marines working with them.”

The Marine Corps continues to see the value in this course. It started in 2015, with one CFS for every 300 Marines. This year, the goal is one CFS for every 75 Marines.

The ultimate goal of CFS training is that informed leadership will go back to their units and train their Marines to be financially stable, according to Tara Gould, personal financial management specialist for Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and Camp Kinser and an instructor for the CFS course. A financially stable Marine is a mission-ready Marine, said Gould, adding that a Marine who is under financial stress will not perform at the same level.

When the students first enrolled, Gould asked the Marines and Sailors to bring a list of their personal finances, bank statements and debts.

“At first, I was hesitant to have someone peer into my personal files,” said Master Sergeant Terrence C. York, the radio chief of 7th Communications Battalion, 3d Marine Headquarters Group, III Marine Expeditionary Force. “Before the course even began, we got a feeling for how our junior Marines will feel when we ask to see all of their financial records. It makes you feel vulnerable at first, but the exercises we do during training with our peers help us relate to our future clients.”

The personal financial management specialists utilized multiple tools to help the Sailors and Marines effectively absorb all of the information.

“We have them wear civilian attire and go by first names here,” said Green. “When you are in a class and everyone is in uniform with their heavy collars, your whole disposition will change. You have a real conversation about money on a completely different level. Money doesn’t know or care about ranks, and when you are talking about finances you shouldn’t either. My favorite part of class is when I see the ‘light bulb.’ ”

The newly graduated Marines and Sailors returned to their commands after the course. Their knowledge of basic finances will provide invaluable help to their junior Marines and Sailors.

“I can’t wait to take everything I learned in this class to go back to my command,” said York. “I’d like to start a program that Marines don’t just need, but one they also want. Hopefully I will give the rough and tough love that I wish I had as a junior Marine. Looking back now, I wish I had this information and I can’t wait to provide it to my unit. I will send any Marines who are eligible for this course, no questions asked.”

LCpl Tayler Schwamb, USMC



MSgt Terrence C. York, right, of 7th Comm Bn, 3d Marine Headquarters Group, III MEF, graduates from the CFS course at Camp Foster, MCB Camp Butler, Okinawa, Japan, June 9. York will serve as a liaison between junior Marines and personal financial management specialists, providing basic financial aid, advice and budget proposals.

LCPL TYLER SCHWAMB, USMC

DPAA Identifies Remains of WW II Marines

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) recently announced that the remains of two U.S. servicemembers, unaccounted for since World War II, have been identified.

The remains were recovered from Betio Island in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. The Marine and Sailor were killed during the Battle of Tarawa in November 1943.

The servicemembers whose remains were identified are:

HN3 Howard P. Brisbane, 21 of New Orleans, La. He was assigned to Headquarters Company, Second Battalion, Eighth Marine Regiment, Second Marine Division.

PFC Larry R. Roberts, 18, of Damascus, Ark. He was assigned to Special Weapons Group, Second Defense Bn, Fleet Marine Force.

Compiled from DPAA news releases

Capt Arthur J. Jackson

Captain Arthur J. Jackson, who was awarded the Medal of Honor during World War II for singlehandedly neutralizing 12 enemy pillboxes on Peleliu, died in Boise, Idaho, at the age of 92.

He was 18 years old in 1942 when he enlisted in the Marine Corps. He was with Third Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, First Marine Division, when he took part in the fighting on Peleliu.

According to his Medal of Honor citation, when his platoon's left-flank advance was halted by fire from enemy troops hidden in fortified positions, Private First Class Jackson took the initiative and moved out in front of the lines to charge a pillbox housing 35 Japanese soldiers.

"Pouring his automatic fire into the opening of the fixed installation to trap the occupying troops, he hurled white phosphorus grenades and explosive charges brought up by a fellow Marine, demolishing the pillbox and killing ... the enemy. Advancing alone under the continuous fire from other hostile emplacements, he employed similar means to smash two smaller positions in the immediate vicinity. Determined to crush the entire pocket of resistance, although harassed on all sides by the shattering blasts of Japanese weapons and covered only by small rifle parties, he stormed one gun position after another, dealing death and destruction ... and succeeded in wiping out a total of twelve pillboxes and fifty Japanese soldiers."

He served in China after the war's end, before returning to civilian life. He later entered the U.S. Army Reserve and was

commissioned. He served in the Army during the Korean War.

In addition to the Medal of Honor, his awards include two Purple Hearts.

MSgt Robert M. Barr, 95, of Salt Lake City, Utah. He was a Marine Corps aviator who trained pilots during WW II. He had assignments in China, Korea and Hawaii, serving for more than 22 years. After retiring from the Marine Corps, he worked as a banker. He was an avid pilot and golfer.

John D. Bayless, 46, in Alamogordo, N.M. He was a Marine who served in Operation Desert Storm.

Sgt Raymond R. Burrowes, 85, of West Unity, Ohio. He was a member of the freshman football team at Michigan State University when the Korean War began. He left school to join the Marine Corps. During the war he was an artillery observer with 1st Bn, 11th Marines, 1stMarDiv. After the war, he returned to school, eventually becoming a veterinarian.

Sgt William R. Callicotte, 87, of Jasper, Texas. He was a Marine who served in the Korean War.

Sgt John E. Carey, 91, of Madison, Wis. During WW II he fought on Okinawa. After the war he served in China and was recalled to active duty during the Korean War. He later worked as a postal clerk for 30 years.

Sgt John M. Dampf, 72, of Pittsburgh, Pa. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after his 1962 graduation from high school. He was a loadmaster for the C-130 and he served in Vietnam. He later worked for UPS. He was a member of the American Legion.

MSgt Harold Davis, 98, of Jacksonville, Fla. He was a Marine who saw action on Guadalcanal during WW II. He was active in his community's Veterans Day and Memorial Day events every year, and offered encouragement to several generations of Marines.

James Ford, 69, of Sayreville, N.J. He was a Navy corpsman who served with Marines in Vietnam.

Sgt Gaye L. Galvan, 81, of Atascadero, Calif. She was a Marine who served in the 1960s. She later was elected to the San Luis Obispo County Board of Education, where she served for 26 years.

Richard D. Gates Sr., 91, of Boylston, Mass. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1944 and served in the Pacific. He saw action on Iwo Jima. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War. He later retired after working 42 years for the Department of Defense.

Kenneth C. Gulling, 94, of Medina, Ohio. He was a Marine who served during WW II and saw combat on Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima.

Col V. Wayne Hazelbaker, 89, of Kailua, Hawaii. His 34-year military career spanned three wars. During WW II, he served in the Navy. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War and went to flight school. He accepted a commission in the Marine Corps in 1953 after becoming a naval aviator. He served in Korea as a fighter pilot, and after the war went home to work on his family's farm.

In 1960, he returned to active duty and flew the A-4 Skyhawk before transitioning to helicopters.

During the Vietnam War he was twice shot down and was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions on Aug. 8, 1966, while flying in support of ground operations in the vicinity of Ban Hieu. As a pilot with VMO-2, he "observed two unsuccessful attempts to deliver ammunition to a Marine reaction force which had become surrounded by North Vietnamese forces. ... Realizing that the supplies were needed desperately by the besieged ground forces, Major Hazelbaker daringly maneuvered his UH-1E ... through the darkness and intense hostile fire and skillfully landed near the Marines' position. Without regard for his own precarious situation, he resupplied the ground unit with ... his own supply of ammunition" When he was forced to return to Dong Ha for refueling, he evacuated several wounded Marines and left behind all of his extra ammunition.

In the following hours, while under enemy fire, he returned to the landing zone two more times to deliver supplies and evacuate casualties. On the third trip, the helicopter was disabled by enemy fire, so he and his crew abandoned the aircraft. All through the night he and his copilot communicated via radio with other aircrews to adjust air strikes.

He later commanded HMM-261 and HMM-263. He flew more than 680 combat missions.

SSgt Dorothea "Dottie" Hershey, 96, of Great Bend, Kan. She enlisted in the Marine Corps and was a member of the second class of Women Marines to complete training at Hunter College in New York City.

Susan W. Howland, 94, of Charlottesville, Va. She joined the Marine Corps in 1943. She served at MCRD Parris Island where she taught machine gunnery and aircraft identification.

Cpl John Huska, 92, of Clark, N.J. During WW II he saw action on Guadalcanal. He was a member of the MarDet of USS *Crescent City* (AP-40).

Sgt Jim Johnson, 93, of Port Orchard, Wash. He was a Marine who served in the South Pacific during WW II. He saw action on Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. After the war he spent 31 years

as a fisheries tech. In 1995, he returned to Iwo Jima for a Reunion of Honor event.

MSgt Brian S. Mahanes, 47, Hanover, Va. He served during Operations Desert Storm, Iraqi Freedom and Continuing Promise. He was a director for CSX Railroad with 24 years of service.

GySgt Joseph J. Pannasch, 80, of Beaufort, S.C. He was a Marine who served as a drill instructor at MCRD Parris Island and also trained new DIs.

Paul D. Reinboldt, 82, of Prior Lake, Minn. He served in Japan and Korea. His grandson and two great-nephews also are Marines.

SSgt Steven A. Rice, 63, of Partlow, Va. He served from 1971-75 and again from 1983-87. After leaving the Corps, he continued to work repairing and rebuilding the LVTP-7.

John Semple, 93, of Canonsburg, Pa. During WW II he served with 4thMarDiv in the South Pacific. He saw action on Roi-Namur, Kwajalein, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima.

Carmen F. Smith, 81, of Polk City, Fla. She served in the 1950s at Camp Lejeune. She later had a career with the Department of Defense.

James T. Smith, 86, of Albuquerque, N.M. He flew combat missions in the Vietnam War. During his 20 years in the

Marine Corps he flew the F-8 Crusader, F-4 Phantom and the A-4 Skyhawk, among other aircraft. After his retirement he continued to pursue his love of flying with the Civil Air Patrol.

MGySgt Johnny A. Stewart Jr., 82, of Stafford, Va. He was a Marine who served for 22 years. He later had a career in the insurance industry.

Cpl Robert "Bob" Sticha, 93, in Wheaton, Ill. He was with the 3dMarDiv in the Pacific during WW II.

SgtMaj Thomas J. Strzelecki, 74, of Bay City, Mich. During his 30-year career in the Marine Corps, he was a door gunner in CH-46 helicopters, had a tour as a DI, and was the sergeant major for FMF Atlantic. He also served two tours in Vietnam. His awards include the Bronze Star with combat "V," the Purple Heart, Air Medal with Numeral 7, Navy Commendation Medal with gold star, and Navy Achievement Medal with combat "V" and gold star.

MSgt Theodore D. "Don" Thompson, 84, of Pasadena, Md. He was wounded in action at the Chosin Reservoir during the Korean War. His 30-year career also included duty as an MSG in Germany and Italy. His awards include the Purple Heart.





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[continued from page 7]

Depot, Barstow, Calif., and was assigned as Operations Chief at the Depot Maintenance Activity. Gen Walt was making his final visits to West Coast bases, and I was driving him around the Yermo facility so he could observe the work that was being carried on.

We had a good time renewing our old acquaintance. He said, "You and I have both come a long way." He was a four star general and I was a master gunnery sergeant. We both had reached our terminal rank.

MGySgt Benn C. Kinslow, USMC (Ret)
Sioux Falls, S.D.

Your April issue article about General Lewis Walt brought back my own memories of Gen Walt during Operation Harvest Moon in Vietnam in December 1965. I was serving in "Echo" Company, Second Battalion, First Marines. The operation took place in the Que Son Mountains in and around the Phouc Ha Valley. It was a miserable operation because it rained almost every day.

Our battalion was given the job to enter and search the Phouc Ha Valley. After a B-52 strike in the valley we were

ordered to climb to the top of a ridgeline overlooking the northwest end of the valley. Fighting the rain and mud we struggled up the slope reaching the top of the ridge in the late afternoon and began digging in for the night. As we were digging our holes, we saw a helicopter approach and land on the narrow ridge. I wondered who would do that and then I saw Gen Walt walking with our battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Hanifin. Was his visit just touching base with his commanders, being with his Marines? I don't know but it sure lifted my spirits.

Soon his chopper lifted off the ridge in the twilight of the day and was gone. The CG of the III MAF didn't have to do that, but then Lew Walt was no ordinary Marine.

Sgt Paul Stenzel
Machesney Park, Ill.

Last Enlisted Marine Aviator

I enlisted in the Corps in April 1969 and completed boot camp at Parris Island and Infantry Training Regiment and Basic Infantry Training School at Camp Lejeune/Camp Geiger. I reported to "staging" at Camp Pendleton in late August 1969. With the initial withdrawal of Marines from Vietnam in August 1969, 19 of us O3s with apparently high GT scores were

sent to Marine Corps Base Twentynine Palms, Calif., to the new communications and electronics battalion relocated from San Diego. We became Air Control/Anti Air Warfare Electronic Operators (AC/WEOCS).

I was assigned to Marine Air Control Squadron 6 at MCAS Cherry Point arriving in December 1969. Sometime in February 1970, I and my fellow AC/WEOCS were awaiting a morning brief before flight operations; the brief was normally conducted by an officer with the rank of major or lieutenant colonel.

On that particular morning, at approximately 0700, we were in the ready room when the door opened and a master gunnery sergeant with a salt and pepper high and tight and those gold-rimmed aviator glasses that were popular at the time strode into the room. My first thought was, "Who is this?" Then I saw the aviator wings on his uniform. He conducted the brief and departed. My question to you is did we have the distinction of being briefed by one of the last of enlisted Marine aviators? It has always puzzled me.

SSgt Lawrence W. Clark
Grafton, W.Va.

• *Odds are good that you were briefed by one of the Corps' last Naval Aviation*

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Contest Details | www.mca-marines.org/gazette

Pilots, or enlisted naval aviators. Master Gunnery Sergeants Joseph A. Conroy, Leslie T. Ericson, Robert M. Lurie and Patrick J. O'Neil all retired on the same day—Feb. 1, 1973.—Editor

Sgt Barbosa Was A Hero

This letter is in regard to Major Al Bevilacqua's excellent narrative in *Leatherneck's* May issue titled, "Korea 1952: Firefight at Outpost 3." I wish to expound on Sergeant Artie Barbosa's role at OP 3 and his heroism and courage under fire.

I was privileged to have befriended Sgt Barbosa in his later years when he served as a docent at the MCRD San Diego Command Museum. Artie was a fascinating and highly respected docent. Over the course of several years I observed Artie inspire and mentor thousands of Marine recruits who passed through the Korean War exhibit as part of their Marine Corps history training. Sgt Barbosa delivered riveting firsthand accounts of the ferocious fighting that occurred on OP 3 the night of April 15, 1952, as his platoon was attacked by an overwhelming force of two Chinese regiments.

As Maj Bevilacqua points out, it may be hard to say if any one man saved the day on OP 3 that night; however, had Artie not been there, the outcome may have

had a different ending. To reinforce the author's assertion, several survivors from the OP that night have since come forward to essentially claim just that. For example, here is an account from a letter that Artie shared with me, a letter he received some years later from one of the Marines who fought alongside him that night:

"For years, I've always wanted to tell you how I feel. When we got hit that night, I honestly felt that we were all going to die. We were greatly outnumbered. I was just 15 feet away from you as you had your gun blazing. It's hard to say how many of the enemy you killed that night, but 50-70 for sure, and many more you wounded. You were really something!

"When daybreak came, there you were—checking on the men, reassuring the wounded. I said to myself what a man! What a Marine! I have never seen before or since, one human being do so much, so selflessly. Every man who witnessed your valor, your courage, your leadership, is a better man for it. I believe your actions were the deciding factor as far as saving my life and many others that night. Because of you, we were able to go on and fulfill our life's destinies."

As noted, Sgt Barbosa received the Navy Cross for his extraordinary heroism. There are many Marines who were on OP 3 that



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night Private First Class Edgar “Bart” Dauberman and others, that believe Sgt Barbosa should have received the Medal of Honor. Corporal Duane Dewey was the only Marine to receive the MOH that night. Without doubt, Cpl Dewey’s actions were most deserving of the honor and no one can take that away. I for one believe that Sgt Barbosa’s actions were equally deserving of the MOH.

One anecdotal account alleges that both Sgt Barbosa and Cpl Dewey were submitted for the MOH at the same time, however, when the two MOH recommendations arrived at the Pentagon, the commissioned awards board decided that only one MOH would be awarded for the one battle, one night, involving one platoon, and the other nominee would be downgraded to a Navy Cross. Unfortunately, for the board, both citations appeared to be of equal merit with no clear-cut winner. At this point, legend has it that a toss of the coin was made to decide the winner.

If this rumor has any validity at all, perhaps it is time to review Sgt Barbosa’s award. Going back some 65 years to reconsider or question a board’s decision that was made at the time is certainly no trivial endeavor; however, the few survivors of OP3 that fateful night, those who fought arguably one of the fiercest

battles of the Korean War, may suggest otherwise.

Col Lynn A. Stuart, USMC (Ret)
San Diego, Calif.

Letter Reunites Marines

I want to thank you all for printing my letter in regards to 26th Marines. After reading my letter, Sergeant Wes Choc, who served with me in the 26th Marines, called and I was never so glad to talk to a Marine that went through hell while fighting side by side in the jungle and rice paddies of Vietnam.

I wish that every Marine that fought in Vietnam would read Sgt Choc’s book, “Just Dust: An Improbable Marine’s Vietnam Story.” Sgt Choc’s story brought tears to this old Marine’s eyes, and I will always pray for the families of Marines that gave their lives to fight for the freedom of the United States of America.

Sgt Sam Leonard, USMC (Ret)
Saltville, Va.

Sgt Sass and His Ducks

I read every issue of *Leatherneck* cover to cover. I particularly enjoy the feature articles about old time Marine veterans as I’m sure other readers do.

In late 1960 I was a young 18-year-old Marine going through Sea School aboard

MCRD, San Diego, Calif.

I met an old salt named Sergeant Sass. He was a veteran of the Banana Wars. I don’t think he had any family and was allowed to live on base at MCRD. He had his own quarters under a stairwell off the parade near the theater. Walking into his room was like stepping back in time. His uniforms, his rack, his locker and all of his old gear were spit and polished.

Sgt Sass was famous for his great sea stories and of course, for his marching ducks. Yes, marching ducks.

I shipped out in January 1961 for sea duty aboard USS *Saint Paul* (CA-73), out of Yokosuka, Japan. I lost track of the old guy and never knew what happened to him.

I hope you can find out more about old Sgt Sass and his ducks. I’m sure his story would make interesting reading for all past and present Marines.

Cpl Richard S. Guzzi
USMC, 1960-64
Denton, Texas

• *Leatherneck has published several articles on Sgt Sass (Sgt Ted Sasiadek, USMC (Ret)) over the years including “Sasiadek’s Ducks” in the May 1950 issue. According to another article, from the August 1973 issue of Leatherneck,*

Submission deadline | 31 Oct 2017

Essay topic | Readiness: the nexus between seizing the initiative and fighting tonight.

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Rules

- Make three essential recommendations on what the Reserve Force should consider to enhance or enrich readiness.
- 2,500 to 3,000 words
- Winners will be selected and announced in November.
- Winners and all publishable essays will appear in the *Marine Corps Gazette*.
- Submit articles and supporting materials to gazette@mca-marines.org or to 715 Broadway Street, Quantico, VA 22134

Prizes

1st Prize - \$1,000
2nd Prize - \$500
3rd Prize - \$250

Sponsored by the Marine Corps Reserve Association and the Marine Corps Association & Foundation.

Sgt Sass served as the custodian of the administrative building at MCRD San Diego after retiring from the Corps in 1946. Both articles and more on Sgt Sass can be accessed online through the Leatherneck archives at <https://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/archive>.—Editor.

MOH Recipient Not Forgotten

On Sept. 12, 1951, First Battalion, Seventh Marines assaulted Hill 673 at Songnap-yong, Korea. A very young Marine sergeant and his squad were under intense machine-gun fire that caused two members of the squad to lay wounded between the squad's position and the Chinese machine-gun bunkers. The sergeant personally rescued the two wounded Marines under intense enemy fire even though he had a severe head wound.

He led his men on a bayonet charge against a bunker and wiped out the gun crew. Still advancing, he attacked another bunker and machine gun nest before he fell in a hail of bullets.

Marine Corps records say he was 24 years old. His family tells me he was 20. This outstanding Marine was Sergeant Frederick W. Mausert, III of Cambridge, N.Y., who was known as Rick.

On the day that Sgt Mausert was killed, 7th Marines were relieved from their front-line position by a battalion of U.S. Army paratroops commanded by Colonel Ryerson Mausert, Rick's uncle. Rick had another uncle who was a colonel in the Army, Clayton Mausert.

Rick was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously and is buried at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va.

Cpl Charles E. Capriola Jr.
USMC, 1953-56
Bennington, Vt.

Has Leatherneck Changed?

As a longtime members of the Marine Corps Association & Foundation and subscriber to *Leatherneck*, I've noted a change in your magazine's content this last year that is, for want of a better description—uninspiring. I found myself thumbing through the April issue and the only article I found at all captivating was the one on legendary General Lewis W. Walt. The other articles on the President's Own Marine Band, spiritual fitness, history of USMC covers, an Ivy League school president and present-day Vietnam were ho-hum at best.

I have a collection of old *Leatherneck* magazines dating back to the 1980s that were donated to our Marine Corps League Detachment by a deceased member's wife. I randomly selected the February 1993 issue and noted the change in content with



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these articles: "Vietnam 25 Years Ago: The Flagpole," by Eric Hammel; "The Tet Offensive," "Korea 40 Years Ago This Month: It was a Bloody and Dangerous February," by R.R. Keene and "The Royal Marines Commando Training."

Marines like me want to know about our past and present combat history and training. That's what we expect to find when we pick up a copy of *Leatherneck*. It appears that articles about Marines in combat situations are no longer of interest to the present publishers, when it should be.

When I was in combat situations in Vietnam, in the back of my mind at all times was knowing I could never let down those brave Marines who preceded me. Failing to accomplish my mission for any reason was not going to happen as long as I had the means to resist.

Our young Marines need to know about our awesome combat history and *Leatherneck* should be educating them.

Capt James P. Coan, USMCR
Sierra Vista, Ariz.

• *We try to provide a mix of articles in each issue that showcases the combat history of the Corps while also reporting on the Marines of today. Leatherneck is, however, much more than simply a journal of the Corps' battles, and throughout our almost 100 years as the Magazine of the*

Marines, we also have provided useful information and reports on lesser-known aspects of the Corps. To say that "articles about Marines in combat situation are no longer of interest to the present publishers" is quite a stretch and can be disproven by a quick review of our June issue alone which included articles on Afghanistan, Makin Island, Pelelieu and a Medal of Honor recipient from World War II. And while you may have found our April issue "ho-hum," many of our other readers enjoyed it as is evidenced by the letters, emails and phone calls we received.—Editor.

Have a question or feel like sounding off? Address your letter to: Sound Off, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or send an e-mail 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 e-mails must contain complete names and postal mailing addresses. Anonymous letters will not be published.—Editor



Reunions

• **5thMarDiv Assn. (and 2dMarDiv Tarawa veterans)**, Oct. 17-24, Kona, Hawaii. Contact Kathy Painton, 62-3928 Loli Place, H-1, Kamuela, HI 96743, (808) 880-9880, kathypainton@hotmail.com.

• **26th Marines Assn. (all eras)**, Aug. 11-13, Las Vegas. Contact G.H. "Sonny" Hollub Jr., (512) 825-4730, sonnyusmc@gmail.com, www.26th Marines.com.

• **Korean War Veterans Assn.**, Oct. 4-8, Norfolk, Va. Contact Sheila Fritts, (217) 345-4414, membership@kwva.org.

• **USMC Combat Correspondents Assn.**, Aug. 21-24, San Diego. Contact Jack Paxton, (352) 748-4698, usmccca@cfl.rr.com, www.usmccca.org.

• **Marine Corps Engineer Assn.**, Oct. 16-18, Fredericksburg, Va. Contact Maj Charlie Dismore, USMC (Ret), (512) 394-9333, www.marcorengasn.org

• **West Coast Drill Instructor Assn. (SgtMaj Leland D. "Crow" Crawford Chapter)**, Sept. 14-17, San Diego. Contact Gregg Stoner, (619) 884-9047, greggstoner22@aol.com, or CWO-3 Chip Dykes, USMC (Ret), (760) 908-2322, www.westcoastdi.org.

• **1st MAW Assn. (RVN)**, Sept. 14-16, San Diego. Contact Al Frater, (201) 906-1197, teanal@optonline.net.

• **Marine Corps Air Transport Assn. (VMR/VMGR)**, Oct. 19-22, Pensacola, Fla. Contact Rich Driscoll, (817) 657-7768, president@mcata.com, www.mcata.com.

• **Seagoing Marines Assn.**, Aug. 22-27, Arlington, Va. Contact Bob Sollom, (540) 840-9310, soll136@msn.com.

• **USMC Food Service Assn.**, Oct. 17-21, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Mike Fishbaugh, (606) 789-5010, smfishbaugh@mikrotec.com.

• **USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn.**, Sept. 21-25, St. Louis. Contact John Wear, (215) 794-9052, johnwear2@verizon.net.

• **7th Engineer Bn Vietnam Veterans' Assn.**, Sept. 21-24, Orlando, Fla. Contact Doug McMackin, (623) 419-2135, gunny mac@hotmail.com, or Jim Taranto, (518) 567-4267, tarantoj@gmail.com.

• **Khe Sanh Veterans Inc.**, Aug. 27-Sept. 3, Cleveland, Ohio. Contact President Tom Eichler, (773) 625-2101, teicl448@aol.com, www.khesanh.org.

• **Subic Bay Marines (25th Annual Reunion)**, Sept. 21-25, Boise, Idaho. Contact A.J. Allen, (208) 941-3345.

• **"Forgotten Heroes," Eastern Recruiting Region Recruiters**, Aug. 17-19, Parris Island, S.C. Contact Larry Risvold, (803) 760-4575, larryrisvold@att.net.

• **FLC, FLSG A/B (RVN)**, Oct. 29-Nov. 1, Monterey, Calif. Contact Frank Miller, familler56@yahoo.com, or Vern Snodderly, vasnodderly@comcast.com.

• **USMC Postal 0160/0161**, Oct. 1-6, Albuquerque, N.M. Contact Harold Wilson, (740) 385-6204, handk.lucerne06@gmail.com.

• **1/5 (1986-1992)**, Sept. 8-10, Macomb, Ill. Contact Scott Hainline, (309) 351-2050, ptimfi@yahoo.com.

• **2/9**, Nov. 8-12, Arlington, Va. Contact Danny Schuster, (978) 667-4762, ditson35@verizon.net, www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org.

• **"Stormy's" 3/3 (1960-62)**, Sept. 18-22, Gettysburg, Pa. Contact Burrell Landes, 2610 West Long Circle, Littleton, CO 80120, (303) 734-1458, bhanon@comcast.net.

• **3/4**, Aug. 16-20, Naperville, Ill. Contact Travis Fryzowicz, (732) 251-5518, maddogandgrace@verizon.net.

• **3/9, F/2/12 and Support Units (all eras)**, Sept. 5-8, San Antonio. Contact Robert W. Stewart, (727) 581-5454, threeninemarines@aol.com.

• **Support Co, 3d Engineer Bn (RVN, 1967-68)**, Sept. 12-14, Rehoboth Beach, Del. Contact A.J. Folk, 215 Sweetwater Lane, Newmanstown, PA 17073, (610) 589-1362, ajfpa@comcast.net.

• **Battery Adjust, 3/11 (all eras)**, Sept. 20-24, Las Vegas. Contact Doug Miller, (402) 540-9431, dwmiller48@gmail.com.

• **B/1/5 and C/1/5 (RVN, 1966-67)** are planning a reunion. Contact SSgt Jim Proulx, USMC (Ret), (904) 343-4850, bertojoto1@gmail.com.

• **D/1/7 (RVN, 1965-70)**, Sept. 21-23, Arlington, Va. Contact Zack Forester, (505) 514-8499, ztfiii@hotmail.com, www.deltacompanyvietnammarines.com.

• **H/2/5 (RVN)**, Oct. 26-29, Santa Fe, N.M. Contact Dave Harbin, (505) 720-4728, harbin_d@q.com.

• **H/2/26**, Sept. 10-16, Branson, Mo. Contact Bill Hancock, 2748 Moeller Dr., Hamilton, OH 45014, (513) 738-5446, hancockw@roadrunner.com.

• **I/3/1 (RVN, 1968-69)**, Sept. 28-30, Dumfries, Va. Contact Rick "Diz" DeZelia, (810) 728-5110, rpdezelia@gmail.com.

• **I/3/3 (RVN, 1965-69)**, Sept. 12-17, Niagara Falls, N.Y. Contact Ted Phelps, (704) 747-6392, tedphelps@i33.org, www.i33.org.

• **K/3/7 (RVN)**, Oct. 4-9, Jacksonville, Fla. Contact Bill Gerke, (631) 433-8575, msggerke@aol.com.

• **M/4/12 and 3d 155 mm Howitzer Battery, 3dMarDiv**, Sept. 10-15, Detroit. Contact Alex Jablonowski, (248) 505-2183, 3rd155s.m4.12@gmail.com.

• **3d 155 mm Gun Btry (SP) and 3d 175 mm Gun Btry (SP)**, Oct. 5-7, Branson, Mo. Contact Ed Kirby, (978) 987-1920, ed-kirby@comcast.net.

• **1st Provisional Marine Brigade ("The Fire Brigade," Korea, 1950)** is planning a 65th anniversary reunion. Contact Col Warren Wiedhahn, USMC (Ret), Military Historical Tours, 13198 Centerpointe Way, #202, Woodbridge, VA 22193, (703) 590-1295, jwiedhahn@aol.com, www.miltours.com.

• **Marine Corps Security Forces, Naval Weapons Station Earle**, Sept. 29-Oct. 1, Colts Neck, N.J. Contact Dusty Wright, (618) 553-2205, dwright.schaefferoil@gmail.com.

• **Marine Detachment USNDC**, Sept. 12-17, Portsmouth, N.H. Contact Steve Jennison, (603) 988-9867, sajbuilds@aol.com.

• **Marine Detachment/Barracks, NS Bermuda (all eras)**, Sept. 24-28, Nashville, Tenn. Contact Dennis McDonald, (763) 473-3458, (612) 247-3299, d.mcdonald82575@comcast.net.

• **Parris Island Brig Guards (1976-79)**, Summer 2017, Beaufort, S.C. Contact Ken Haney, 26420 Highway 49, Chase City, VA 23924, kenhaney79@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Class 3-66/38th OCC**, Oct. 11-14, San Antonio. Contact Terry Cox, tcoc95@cox.net, www.usmc-thebasic school-1966.com.

• **TBS, Class 4-67**, Sept. 21-24, Wash-

Success Story?

Has your entry in *Leatherneck's* Reader Assistance allowed you to reunite with a boot camp buddy, reconnect with old friends or track down the recruit graduation book you lost years ago? We would love to hear your success stories. Send them to: Sara W. Bock, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or s.boock@mca-marines.org.

ington, D.C. Contact Ken Pouch, (860) 881-6819, kpouch5@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Co K, 9-68**, is planning a reunion. Contact Jim Stiger, (206) 999-1029, jimstiger@earthlink.net.

• **TBS, Co F, 6-79**, is planning a reunion. Contact LtCol Tom Conners, USMC (Ret), (919) 303-2697, (919) 418-5757, tconners3@yahoo.com.

• **“Kilo” Co (Plts 277, 278, 279 and 280), Parris Island, 1961**, is planning a reunion. Contact MSgt Martin D. Smith, USMC (Ret), 10 Lee Ct., Stafford, VA 22554, (540) 720-3653, martann843@gmail.com.

• **Plt 94, Parris Island, 1955**, Oct. 19-21, Parris Island, S.C. Contact Miles Martin, (386) 315-2115, mcmartin@bellsouth.net, Orville Hubbs, (513) 932-5854, onpahubbs@gmail.com, or Dale Wilson, (434) 944-7177, wzeke35@aol.com.

• **Plt 98, Parris Island, 1948**, is planning a reunion. Contact SSgt Jim Proulx, USMC (Ret), (904) 343-4850, bertojoto1@gmail.com.

• **Plt 171, Parris Island, 1966**, is planning a reunion. Contact J.P. Kuchar, 33 Sheridan Ave., Metuchen, NJ 08840, (732) 549-6468, jpkuchar@mac.com.

• **Plt 244, Parris Island, 1967**, is planning a reunion. Contact former Sgt J.D. Croom III, (704) 965-8521, jcroom47@aol.com.

• **Plt 245, San Diego, 1965**, is planning a reunion. Contact David S. Alvarez, (209) 735-2601, srt8o06@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 266, Parris Island, 1962**, is planning a reunion. Contact Donald A. Welch, 129 Hawthorne Pl., Ithaca, NY 14850, (607) 256-0554, don814u@hotmail.com.

• **Plt 340, Parris Island, 1963**, is planning a reunion. Contact Garrett W. Silvia, (508) 992-7392, gwsil@comcast.net.

• **Plt 431, Parris Island, 1945**, is planning a reunion. Contact 1stSgt George P. Cavros, USMC (Ret), (262) 782-7813, gcavros88@gmail.com.

• **Plt 1040, San Diego, 1968**, is planning a reunion. Contact Stephen Norpel, 206 N. 7th St., Bellevue, IA 52031, (563) 451-8417, snorpel@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 1059, San Diego, 1967**, is planning a reunion. Contact Dave Jamieson, (805) 896-7404, daveyo_jamieson@msn.com.

• **Plt 2023, San Diego, 1983**, is planning a reunion. Contact Jeffrey R. Johnson, 3751 Merced Dr., Unit 4D, Riverside, CA 92503, jrj430@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 2030, Parris Island, 1965-66**, is planning a reunion. Contact John E. Lyford, (518) 654-6073, reniejohn@roadrunner.com.

• **Plt 2041, San Diego, 1967 (50th anniversary)**, Nov. 9-12, Las Vegas. Contact Daniel Palacios, (951) 541-8940, dphousemouse@gmail.com, or Enrique

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Ortiz, (949) 874-3636.

• **Plt 2077, San Diego, 1966**, is planning a reunion. Contact SgtMaj Raymond Edwards, USMC (Ret), 100 Stephens St., Boyce, LA 71409, sgtmajedretired@gmail.com.

• **Plt 2086, San Diego, 1966**, is planning a reunion. Contact Bill Kennedy, (707) 527-8319, wm.kennedy98@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 4035, “Papa” Co, Parris Island, 2000**, is planning a reunion. Contact Tammy (Manyik) Epperson, (571) 451-7263, tammy.epperson@gmail.com.

• **Marine Air Groups (WW II to present)**, Oct. 11-14, Branson, Mo. Contact Jerry Gipe, jgipe@hotmail.com, or Joseph Mowry, josephmowry@att.net.

• **Marine Air Base Squadrons 43 and 49**, Sept. 9, Earlville, Md. Contact Col Chuck McGarigle, USMC (Ret), 23 Greenwood Dr., Bordentown, NJ 08505, (609) 291-9617, mabsreunion@comcast.net.

• **HMR/HMM/HMH-361 (all eras)**, Sept. 7-10, Arlington, Va. Contact John Ruffini, (850) 291-6438, ruffinich53@gmail.com.

• **VMM/HMM-364 (all ranks/eras)**, Sept. 19-22, North Kansas City, Mo. Contact GySgt Joe Barlow Jr., USMC (Ret), (816) 813-1662, pf6468@hotmail.com, or MSgt Dave Magee, USMC (Ret), dave@hmm-364.org.

Ships and Others

• **USS Bremerton (CA-130/SSN-698)**, Sept. 24-29, Portland, Ore. Contact N. Polanowski, 5996 County Rd. 16, Belfast, NY 14711, (585) 365-2316, rpolanowski@stny.rr.com.

• **USS Canberra (CA-70/CAG-2)**, Oct. 11-15, Harrisburg, Pa. Contact Ken Minick, P.O. Box 130, Belpre, OH 45714, (740) 423-8976, usscanberra@gmail.com.

• **USS Duluth (LPD-6)**, Sept. 6-10, Duluth, Minn. Contact John Adams, (484) 766-3715, john.adams@ussduluth.org, www.ussduluth.org.

• **USS Hornet (CV-8/CV/CVA/CVS-**

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12), Sept. 13-17, Kansas City, Mo. Contact Sandy Burket, P.O. Box 108, Roaring Spring, PA 16673, (814) 224-5063, hornetcva@aol.com, www.usshornetassn.com.

• **USS Inchon (LPH/MCS-12)**, Oct. 15-19, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact David F. Fix, P.O. Box 6361, Nalcrest, FL 33856, (717) 203-4152, ussinchon@gmail.com.

• **USS John R. Craig (DD-885)**, Sept. 6-10, Norfolk, Va. Contact Jerry Chwalek, 9307 Louisiana St., Livonia, MI 48150, (734) 525-1469, jermail@ameritech.net, www.ussjohnrcraig.com.

• **USS Midway (CVB/CVA/CV-41)**, Sept. 11-13, San Diego. Contact Ronald E. Pope, ronpope2@yahoo.com, www.ussmidway.net/home.html.

• **USS Providence (CL-82/CLG-6)**, Sept. 17-21, Buffalo, N.Y. Contact Jim Chryst, (717) 284-6996, jchryst@embarqmail.com.

• **USS Ranger (CVA/CV-61)**, Sept. 20-23, Warwick, R.I. Contact George Meoli, (203) 453-4279, uss.ranger@yahoo.com.

• **USS Saratoga Assn. (CV-60)**, Sept. 27-30, Saratoga Springs, N.Y. Contact Ed McCready, 447 Land'Or Dr., Ruther Glen, VA 22546, (804) 589-1170, emc0853@yahoo.com.

Mail Call

• Vickie Sanchez Woolf, (405) 312-4421, woolf@frontier.net, to hear from anyone who knew or served with her father, **Sgt Ernest M. SANCHEZ**, who was stationed at the **Kimpo Air Field in Korea from September to December 1950**.

• Tom Morton, (760) 727-5921, anmcan@earthlink.net, to hear from anyone who

can identify the **gunnery sergeant in the photo (below)**, which was taken at the **American Legion in Vista, Calif., May 1974**.

• Stephen A. Hopkins, 1014 Golden Sands Way, Leland, NC 28451, anshopkins@peoplepc.com, to hear from anyone who knew or has information regarding SSgt Ivan M. HOPKINS, who served in Shanghai from 1932-38.

• SMSgt Eddie Quinn, USAF (Ret), 300 Stratford Rd., Jacksonville, NC 28540, (910) 346-9510, equinn@ec.rr.com, to hear from anyone who knew or served with **Cpl Edgar Tomlinson LACY**, who was stationed at **MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C.**, and with **4th Pioneer Bn, 4thMarDiv**.

• Paul Steward, 4452 W. 156 St., Lawndale, CA 90260, (310) 863-4487, usmc9555@aol.com, to hear from anyone who has photographs or information about the **3d Bn, 9th Marines football team** at

Camp Surikan, Okinawa, 1956.

• SSgt Doyle McMillan, (423) 638-3256, to hear from anyone who has videos, pictures or names of the **10 honor guards** in the Capitol Rotunda at the **Eisenhower Inauguration**.

• Lawson Alvin Rose, 190 Shelton Rd. Apt. 187, Madison, AL 35758, (630) 532-8514, (256) 289-3054, to hear from or about **Lt Erica F. CHANEY** from Atlanta, Ga., who was an **assistant disbursing officer at MCAS El Toro, Calif., 1975**. He would also like to hear from or about **Sgt PENNING**, who was a **drill instructor for Plt 1114, San Diego, 1970**.

• Dessaree Mitchell, (925) 354-5179, dessaree@gmail.com, to hear from anyone who served with or knew **LCpl Peter LITTLE**, a member of **Plt 2025, San Diego, 1965**, who **died in Vietnam in November 1966**.

Wanted

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

• Shel Silberman, (949) 500-3309, shelsilberman@yahoo.com, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 119, San Diego, 1962**.

• Dorene Schiro, 26874 Treasures Ridge Dr., Kingwood, TX 77339, (713) 868-7306, (504) 228-1051, dorene.a.schiro@cbp.dhs.gov, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 2010, San Diego, 1956**.

• Dessaree Mitchell, (925) 354-5179, dessaree@gmail.com, wants a **platoon photo and recruit graduation book for Plt 2025, San Diego, 1965**.

• Donald Menzies, 8 Manor Place, Huntington Station, NY 11746, (631) 423-0981, wants a **platoon photo, Plt S-17, Parris Island, 1952**.



COURTESY OF TOM MORTON

Tom Morton would like to hear from anyone who can identify the gunnery sergeant, left, in this photo, which was taken at the American Legion in Vista, Calif., in May 1974.



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SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

Belleau Wood Buttons

In the spring of 2005, while stationed with Marine Forces Europe in Germany, I attended the Memorial Day ceremony at the American cemetery at Belleau Wood. The uniform of the day was Blue-White "A." I billeted in a quaint bed-and-breakfast with a delightful French host.

The evening before the event, I began to prepare my uniform. As I was removing the cleaner's plastic from my uniform blouse, I anxiously noted the absence of two buttons on the front of the coat. In a mild panic, I searched my room, luggage, vehicle and all points in between—no luck. I alerted the Marine who was traveling with me in hopes that he had some buttons to spare—no joy there either. I asked my host, who scoured her collection and produced some close resemblances, but those would not do.

My fellow Marine suggested we ask Gilles Lagin, the local battlefield museum curator, if he might have something that could be used as a close substitute. We traveled to the museum to see Gilles, who, as a child, collected discarded odds and ends from the battlefield. As he listened to my story, he rummaged through stacks of boxes yet to be catalogued. After some time, Gilles produced a small box with some weathered buttons. Of those buttons two were of the same size and shape of my missing ones but were black and chipped. Gilles let me borrow them.

With buttons in hand, I returned to the bed-and-breakfast and asked my host for some gold paint. She produced a flat gold paint,

and after conducting some testing, I proceeded to gild the relic buttons. The gloss did not match the anodized buttons so I grabbed a can of Brasso and a rag and was able to produce a credible shine that came close to matching the anodized sheen. My host then sewed on the World War I vintage buttons.

Upon donning my uniform and being closely inspected by my travel companion, we collectively deemed that I might be able to pull it off.

I swore my travel companion to secrecy, and braved the scrutiny of my fellow Marines. Nobody was the wiser as my ruse remained undetected even while participating in the events at the Devil Dog Fountain.

A couple days later, an article appeared in the local paper explaining how Gilles had saved the day for a hapless American Marine in dire need.

Since it was written in French, my secret remained safe ... until now.

LtCol Geoffrey A. Corson
USMC (Ret)
Chesapeake, Va.

Driving School— Okinawa Style

It all started with a bottle of sake and a bad idea.

We were walking back to our barracks from liberty in New Koza, Okinawa. My buddy "Ski" wanted to learn to drive a stick shift. The 12th Marines motor pool on Camp Sukiran was just up the hill, so off we went.

We picked a mighty mite (small jeep) and after a bit of instruction, off we went with no headlights.

The area was too small to get past second gear. It was really dark, and you could barely make out the turns.

Soon headlights we knew weren't ours appeared. It was the officer of the day (OD).

I told Ski to put on the emergency brake and run. The brake didn't work, but we were already running. The mighty mite hit the gate to the motor pool.

Anyone who runs in the dark knows that's also a bad idea. The ground disappeared. We were launched into the air off a steep hill and ended up in a binjo (sewage) ditch which probably saved us from breaking anything. The sound and smell were horrible.

We were wearing kakis and dress shoes because lance corporals and below had to wear uniforms on liberty. As we walked back to our barracks, all you could hear was the squish-squish sound of our feet in the shoes.

The barracks was close by and luckily the head and showers were on the lower deck. We showered while still dressed, peeling off one layer at a time until we were bare. Thank God the water was hot. We passed by the duty NCO who just stared and held his nose.

The next morning the duty NCO told me that the OD had followed our "trail." He figured since nothing was broken or stolen that we had paid the full price for our actions.

Seven days later, March 8, 1965, we were on C-130s heading for Da Nang.

Pete Roberto
USMC, 1963-67
Merrick, N.Y.

Dear John

Along with orders for the war zone, I received a 20-day leave. As an 18-year-old private first class, I spent those days dating two girls, one during the day and

the other during the night, switching back and forth. It was a tense and brilliant achievement to keep them from finding out about one another.

From Vietnam, I would write to both and we would profess our undying love for one another. I didn't have much time for letter writing, so I would write a letter to one of them and then copy it exactly word for word to the other one, changing only the name.

Both girls were in their senior year of high school at the same school.

One day at school, the girls were talking about boyfriends. One of them said her boyfriend was in Vietnam.

Another said, "My boyfriend is in Vietnam, too."

The first one said, "My boyfriend is in the Marines."

The second one said, "So is mine."

The first one said, "My boyfriend's name is Bill."

The second one said, "What?"

And that's how they found out. They got together and compared letters.

Fast forward to Vietnam a couple of weeks later.

Mail Call was very important back then. To get a letter from home raised spirits and gave you a physical connection to the place you longed to be. But this particular Mail Call promised bad karma. I received letters from both girls at the same time. Holding the two letters I felt a strong negative "juju" before I even opened them.

I decided to go for it. I opened the first one and it was as I expected. She had found out and was breaking up with me. I opened the second one, it was the exact word for word letter. The only difference in the two

letters was that each had signed their own name.

So there you have it. I believe I am the only Marine to have ever received two Dear John letters on the same day. Had my heart broken twice.

Cpl William Stilwagen
USMC, 1968-70
Onancock, Va.

I Was Following Orders

Following orders and carrying them out to the best of my abilities had been drummed into me in Parris Island. As one of the orderlies to the commander in chief of the Pacific, Admiral Harry D. Felt, I was called into the admiral's office and given an order.

"Corporal, I want you to deliver this package to the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower. Can you do that?" With a hearty, "Yes, Sir," I picked up the package and left Camp H.M. Smith in Hawaii for the other side of Oahu.

The gift was a basket of Hawaiian fruit decorated with a red, white and blue ribbon. Using the admiral's staff car, I headed for Kaneohe. Pulling into the lanai, I got out of the car and carried my precious package to the main door, knocked and was met by a Marine major who asked what I was doing. I stated my story about the admiral's order. Ushered inside, the major said that he would see that the President received the gift. That's when my short-timer's attitude kicked in, and I said, "Sir, I am sorry. I cannot do that. I was ordered by Admiral Felt to make sure the President received this gift."

In a huff, the major went to where the President and others had gathered, and in his place, a full colonel walked up to me and said, "Corporal, I'll take the gift." I repeated the admiral's order and said, "Sir, I have been asked to make sure the gift was received."

After some not-too-polite admonitions, I was escorted into the living room, met with the President and extended greetings to him from the admiral. He asked where I was from and when I said, "Pennsylvania, Sir," the President said that he had a farm in Gettysburg. Mission accomplished.

Dr. Allen R. Remaley
Scottsdale, Ariz.

Third Time Is Not A Charm

After completing Sea School in 1963 my first permanent duty station was aboard the mighty USS *Wasp* (CVS-18), home ported in Boston, Mass.

Our detachment first sergeant was a recently promoted sergeant major. He had been a POW during World War II and was the recipient of two Bronze Stars and received two Purple Hearts.

My first formal inspection was before the sergeant major. When he was in front of me, I struggled twice to get the bolt of the M1 rifle locked to the rear. The sergeant major looked me squarely in the eye and said, "... damn, Marine, put some Marine muscle into it."

The third time was not the charm. The muzzle of the weapon went forward striking the sergeant major in the forehead, drawing blood and knocking his cover off his head. He picked up his cover and placed it back on his head and said, "Why don't you follow it up with a vertical butt stroke, a--hole."

Sadly, the sergeant major was killed in Vietnam.

SgtMaj Peter J. Seagriff
USMC (Ret)
Georgetown, Ky.

Failed Salute

After spending the previous 4½ years on recruiting duty in Baltimore, Md., in 1976, I found myself stationed as battery gunnery sergeant of H&S Battery,

12th Marines in Camp Sukiran, Okinawa.

One day while walking deep in thought, I was unaware of someone walking past me. All of the sudden I heard a voice say, "Gunny." I turned around to see a most impressive major. He asked, "Don't you believe in saluting officers?" I immediately came to attention, mumbled an apology, and rendered an appropriate salute. After a mild chastising I was on my way.

Later that day, I discovered the major was Harvey C. "Barney" Barnum Jr., Medal of Honor recipient for action in Vietnam. Needless to say, for the remainder of my tour I was not only required, but honored to salute him.

Bernard J. Henry Jr.
USMC, 1960-81
Shillington, Pa.

Honoring Arizona's Crew

In the early 1960s the aircraft carriers at Pearl Harbor docked at the old Battleship Row in front of the USS *Arizona* Memorial on Ford Island. From 1961-63, I was a plane captain on A4Ds in VMA-212 based at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, on the other side of Oahu.

On return from a qualification cruise and after 20 or 30 hours of constant flight quarters, we plane captains were tired and dirty and taking a break on the hangar deck in the No. 2 elevator opening. The elevator being "up" gave us a huge picture window to the passing scene as we passed down the "slot" around Ford Island. Somebody broke out a deck of cards and several of us were playing Euchre on an overturned box.

The ships' crews had been ordered to wear dress whites and they lined the flight deck, shoulder to shoulder. As we passed outgoing ships, the captain would announce, "Attention to Port" or "Attention to

Starboard" and all the swabbies rendered hand salutes to the outgoing ships, which did the same in response with their crews. Needless to say, a bunch of dirty, tired Marines looking at these passing swabbies all spit shined and rested did not appreciate the tradition we were observing. We had our own version of the hand salute that was passed to the outgoing vessels. This made for very astonished expressions from one submarine, as I recall. Sailors in a row, from fore to aft and up the conning tower, mouths agape at the dirty, green humanoids disrespecting their vessel.

As we rounded Ford Island preparing to dock, the captain announced, "Attention to Starboard" and there, coming into view was the new (at the time) *Arizona* Memorial, flying the stars and stripes as a commissioned ship of the Navy. Every one of us stood at attention and saluted that beautiful flag as we passed slowly by and into the slip just in front of the memorial. No way could we not honor those brave men. Still brings a tear to my eye remembering.

Cpl Norm Spilleth
USMC, 1960-64
Minneapolis, Minn.

Do you have an interesting story from your time in the Corps that will give our readers a good chuckle? Maybe it's a boot camp tale or a good old sea story that will have us in stitches? We would love to hear your stories and see any accompanying photographs. Write them down (500 words or less) and send them to: Patricia Everett, Leatherneck Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or e-mail them to p.everett@mca-marines.org. We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA&F membership for the "Sea Story of the Month." Spread the word!



Saved Round

By Nancy S. Lichtman



SSGT EDWARD UMINOWICZ, USMC

HISTORY IN THE MAKING—The Evening Parade at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., on Aug. 28, 1959, included something extra special—the relief and appointment ceremony of the first Marine to serve as Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps (SMMC).

Sergeant Major Wilbur Bestwick, left, the first SMMC, watches as his replacement, SgtMaj Francis D. Rauber, center, accepts his sword from the 21st Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Randolph Pate.

The SMMC post was established in 1957 as the senior enlisted advisor to the CMC; it was the first assignment of its kind in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces. In 1970, the Marine Corps authorized the distinctive rank insignia of the SMMC featuring the eagle, globe and anchor flanked by two five-point stars.

SgtMaj Bestwick enlisted in 1934 and his pre-World War II assignments included sea duty onboard USS *Louisville* (CL-28). He served with the Third Marine Division on Bougainville and Guam during WW II and was the 1stMarDiv Sergeant Major during the Korean War. His awards include the Navy Commendation Medal with combat “V.”

Since SgtMaj Bestwick, 17 Marines have served as Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, and one Marine, SgtMaj Bryan B. Battaglia, filled the position of senior enlisted advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

