

SEPTEMBER 2016

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

# Leatherneck

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## Training and Testing Leadership Skills

**Korean War:  
USMCR Ready  
To Fight?**

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**Outwitting Bandits  
Along the Rio Coco**

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**Nuclear Weapons:  
Marines Played Role  
In Testing the Bomb**



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Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, Marine Corps veteran Cpl Nicholas Montijo found help from an unusual source. BraveHearts Therapeutic Riding and Educational Center in Harvard, Ill., provided him treatment through riding, instructing and caring for horses.

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**COVER:** Marines undergoing training with School of Infantry-West, Detachment Hawaii, conduct a patrol during the Advanced Infantry Course (AIC) at the Kahuku Training Area in Hawaii on July 18, 2016. AIC is intermediate training designed to enhance and test Marines' skills and leadership abilities as squad leaders in a rifle platoon. Photo by Cpl Aaron Patterson, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$2 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

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## Letter of the Month

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

I was headed for lunch at a fast-food chicken restaurant. I was wearing a red golf shirt. On the shirt, over my heart was a gold eagle, globe and anchor insignia. On the other side was a yellow ribbon signifying my service in Vietnam. I served in Vietnam from 1969 through 1970. As I approached the front door, I caught the eye of a 20-something Asian male staring at me. I smiled and passed him as I entered the restaurant.

I ordered and sat down to eat my meal. During the whole time this male kept looking in my direction and was loitering just outside the front door. I wondered what he was up to or maybe he recognized me from another place. About 20 minutes later I finished and walked out the front door.

This male came up to me and asked me if I had served in Vietnam. I told him yes. He then stated, "My parents were saved and evacuated out of Vietnam by Marines." He also told me that he was born in the United States. He told me that if it wasn't for the Marines, he wouldn't be talking to me, nor would he be an American citizen.

He wanted to shake my hand and thank

me. As we shook hands, he was crying. I'm a person who is never short on words. But this time all I could say was "You're welcome." He turned and left.

As I walked away, there were tears in my eyes as well. Never has an encounter affected me so much. You never know what actions affect other people's lives. I didn't do the evacuating for his parents but all he knew was that Marines saved them and we were the reason he was alive and a U.S. citizen.

Sgt Raymond Gomez  
USMC, 1967-71  
Lake Forest, Calif.

## Fourth of July Celebration And "The Marines' Hymn"

On the eve of July 4, 2016, celebrations of this country's Independence Day and freedom, I was engaged watching on television the most famous Boston Pops Orchestra with conductor Keith Lockhart. They were playing at the Boston Esplanade at the start of the program. They were playing our country's National Anthem to begin the festivities and then proceeded to play each military service branch song.

To open up with the concert for the many viewers attending, when they played "The Marines' Hymn," the television cameras focused on my brother Marines in uniform standing at attention. I was ever so proud of them and myself being a Marine brother. Still to this day, while

hearing the playing of our famous hymn, this former old breed Marine, now at the age of 81 years old, gets tingling and goose bump sensations every time I hear my favorite Marine hymn being played.

They say once a Marine, always a Marine to the day he dies.

Cpl John Messia Jr.  
USMC, 1952-54  
Brockton, Mass.

## "Belleau Wood: 6 Days in June"

I read the good article "Belleau Wood: 6 Days in June" [June issue] with great interest. I would like to add a little information on the photograph on page 35 [shown below]. The Marine on the right, holding the hardtack and hand grenade, is my father, Edwin Thomas Beach.

My father was in the 23d Company, 6th Machine Gun Battalion. The 23d Machine Gun Company was transferred from 2/5 to the 6th Machine Gun Bn to better utilize the fire power so they did most of their fighting with 2/5. He had mentioned a movie was made of them in Belleau Wood. Looking through the moving picture section of the National Archives, I found a short video on one of the cassettes. Thanks to the help of a gentleman in the audio visual division at the Marine Corps University, I have a copy of that short video.

Jerry Beach  
Canton, Ohio



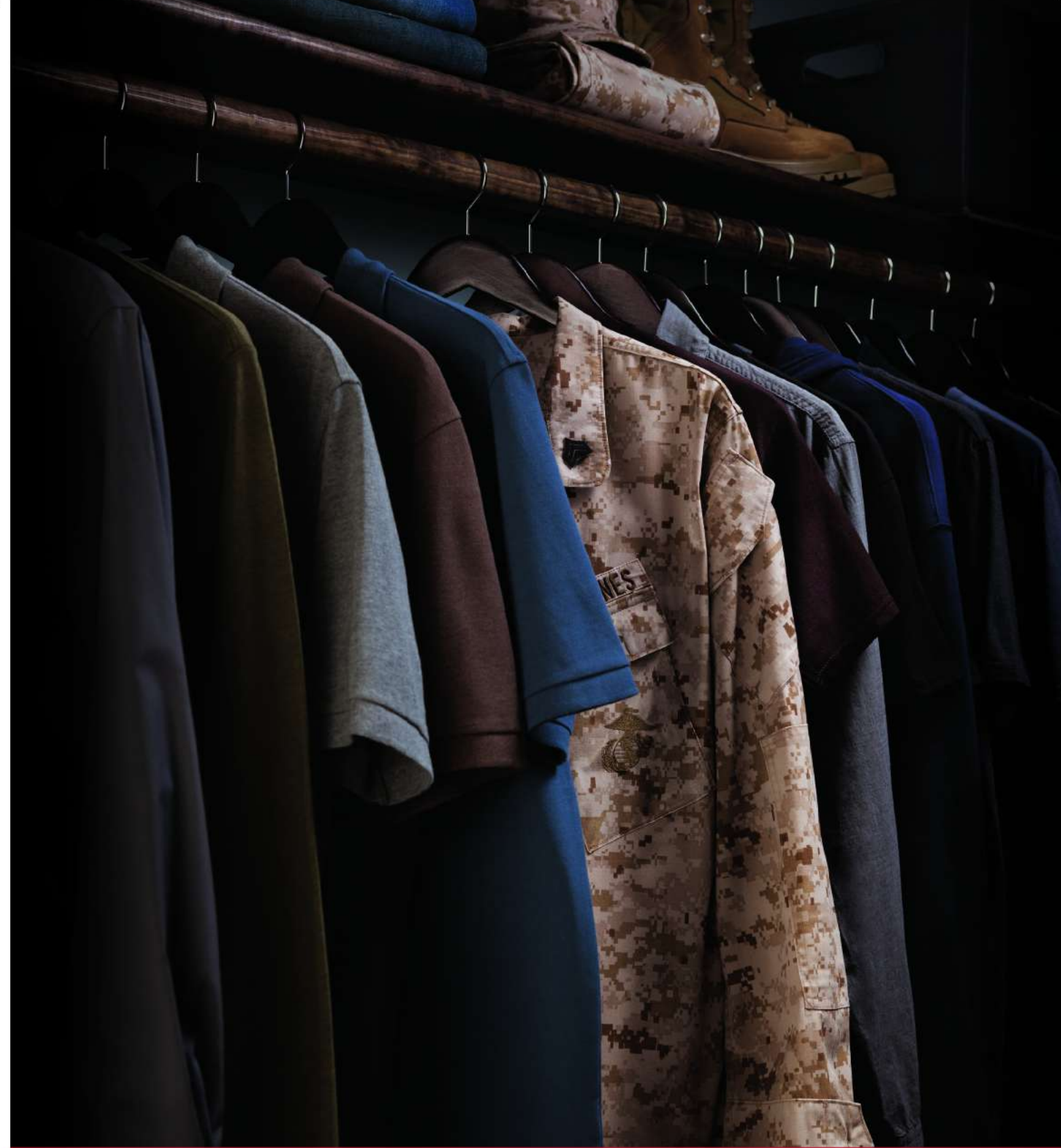
COURTESY OF JERRY BEACH

Edwin Thomas Beach was with the 23d Co, 6th Machine Gun Bn.



COURTESY MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION ARCHIVES

Marines gather around a German trench mortar captured by 2d Bn, 5th Marines during the Battle of Belleau Wood.



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Major Bevilacqua's story of "Belleau Wood: 6 Days in June" has clarified a point of curiosity that I've had for many years. My Dad was a private in the 5th Marines and was wounded on June 6, 1918. During "the assault," he fell between the latitudes of two German machine guns with bullets hitting the ground above and below his position. I didn't think much of it as a youngster, but in my later years I began to wonder how, if assaulting a hill, the opposing machine-gun fire would be below your position. I never knew of Hill 142 until Maj Bevilacqua's article. Now, I know that my dad was hit assaulting from Hill 142 in the evening assault of the woods.

Dad was able to return to his unit. The bullet that hit his leg was deflected from the thigh bone by an eagle, globe and anchor that he had in his pocket, which I now treasure. He was unscathed throughout the remainder of the war, except for some gassing, and he participated in the occupation of Germany. In the early 1930s, my dad and several other World War I Marines were instrumental in organizing the Marine Corps Reserve in Indianapolis, Ind. He was mustered out as First Sergeant Rush Williams in 1940 for physical reasons.

In 1957 after a tour in Okinawa, I was assigned to the 6th Marines. I wore my battle jacket with "pogey rope" home. Dad went to his bedroom and returned with his French fourragere, the original. "Here, you can wear mine," he said. Sorry Dad, it's a little different (in color contrast, faded), but I'll be glad to take care of it for you (another of my prized possessions).

One other comment by my dad was that when the Germans emerged from the woods they were so overconfident from previous successes that they had their rifles slung. They were smoking pipes, joking and laughing. As they began to fall, others in their ranks were looking up, expecting aircraft to be strafing as they had not encountered sharpshooters before.

Thank you, Maj Bevilacqua, and *Leatherneck* magazine. I always scan any WW I pictures that you may publish just in case I catch a glimpse of dad. I know from a photo of him my mom had from Germany that he had a mustache that he dutifully removed when he returned home.

MSgt Rush J. Williams, USMC (Ret)  
1954-75  
San Diego, Calif.

## Flag Raising Controversy

With all the controversy surrounding the second flag raising where do we (Marine Corps) stand with the first? There was a great article done in *Leatherneck* a while back with Dustin Spence, ("Unraveling the Mysteries of the Flag Rais-

ing," October 2006), and it seems to be some good work with the only discrepancy being one Marine. Was it Robeson or Schultz? Does anyone have an official stance?

Just for the record four of my kids are currently serving, two Marines and two airman.

Sgt Ron Montgomery  
USMC, 1985-97  
Clearwater, Fla.

*Editor's Note: The Commandant of the Marine Corps has directed that the photos of the first flag raising on Mount Suribachi be reviewed. Leatherneck will publish the results of that review when it is released.*



COURTESY OF PETER BASLER

## Can anyone identify this pin?

### Pin on Winter Green Cover Identification

My aunt was stationed on Maui during World War II. I don't know the Marine unit. I found a pin on her winter greens cover. I am wondering if it can be identified. If it has value, I will send it on to a women's museum.

Peter Basler  
USMC, 1967-70  
Kingston, N.H.

## Old Corps Terminology

When I was in the Corps in the 1960s, we referred to the shower as the Rain Locker.

Les Bowles  
USMC, 1959-68  
Bertrand, Mo.

## Ghost Platoon

I happened to come across the article "Ghost Platoon: Operation Frequent Wind," and noticed the picture above the beginning of the article [page 30], where the C-130 is burning. I remember this picture vividly, as I was the person who took it. Gunnery Sergeant D.L. Shearer, USMC, a great Marine as well as a great person, is credited for taking this picture.

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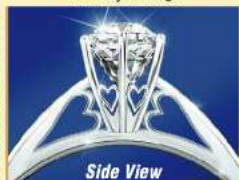
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A little background: When HMH-463 was on USS *Hancock* (CVA-19), we were getting ready to do Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of Saigon. GySgt Shearer had been ordered by the ship's captain not to go on any helicopters for the purpose of taking pictures of the evacuation. As to why, the gunny didn't know. Captain "Field Day" Fellows, as we called him, ran a clean ship and a tight ship. Everyone on the ship knew this, especially the Marines.

The gunny knew I was flying the mission with the squadron CO and asked if I would take as many pictures as I could. I agreed. He gave me five or six rolls of film which I turned over to him after the evacuation was completed. This is one of those pictures. All the credit goes to GySgt Shearer. GySgt Shearer is retired and lives in White House, Tenn.

1stSgt Bruce Hansen, USMC (Ret)  
Menifee, Calif.

• *Thank you for correcting the record. I can easily understand the confusion on the photo credit given the circumstances at the time. Good on Gunny Shearer for making sure the mission was accomplished regardless of the challenges!*—Editor

#### My Flight With Fokker Was Fun for Him But Not For Me

I read with more than passing interest your article entitled "Manfred 'Fokker' Rietsch: Fighter Pilot Extraordinaire," which appeared in the April edition of *Leatherneck*. I got to know Fokker in a rather unusual way at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii in 1976.

After completing Marine Corps Command and Staff College at Quantico, Va., in June 1976, I received PCS (permanent change of station) orders to the First Marine Brigade in Kaneohe Bay. I was assigned as director of Brigade School. This assignment was rather short-lived. Six months later, the brigade commander, Brigadier General Harry Hagaman, decided to close the Brigade Schools due to the high personnel overhead required to man the schools. I suddenly found myself out of a job.

Within a couple of weeks I found a job vacancy in the Marine Corps Air/Ground Officer Exchange Program with Marine Air Group (MAG) 24. At that time MAG-24 was the largest MAG in the Marine Corps with 12 subordinate squadrons, including two F-4 Phantom jet squadrons, i.e., VMFA-212 and VMFA-232. I was assigned as the MAG Assistant Operations Officer. The group commander, Colonel "Chick" Challgren, wanted to give me as well-rounded an experience in the air side of the house as possible. Accordingly, the



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## Behind the Lines



RON LUNN

Nancy Lee White Hoffman, *Leatherneck* Deputy Editor, is retiring after 33 years of dedication to the magazine. Nancy first joined the staff of *Leatherneck* in 1979 as an intern. After graduating in 1983 from James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Va., with a degree in communication arts, she was the assistant manager of the Marine Corps Association bookstore before joining *Leatherneck* as an editorial assistant in 1984.

During her time with *Leatherneck*, Nancy has written stories and has taken numerous photos for the magazine—including 12 *Leatherneck* covers. Her expertise in everything from Marine Corps history to editing and proofreading will be missed.

One thing Nancy said she will miss the most about *Leatherneck* is the people—fellow staff members, readers, contributors and, of course, Marines. Whether they stopped by the office, or she met them on assignment, she said she is thankful to have met so many people who love and appreciate the magazine.

Nancy plans to spend more time with her family and continue to do volunteer work, as well as pursue her love of research.

Nancy has not only left her imprint on *Leatherneck*, but also with the other staff members and readers of the Magazine of Marines. And so, we wish her “Fair Winds and Following Seas” and best of luck in her future endeavors.

—Kelsey Ripa

MAG sent me over to Naval Air Station Barber’s Point, Hawaii, for altitude and ejection seat training to prepare me for a flight in the back seat of an F-4 Phantom.

The pilot was none other than Manfred “Fokker” Rietsch, who at that time was the executive officer of VMFA-212. During the first portion of my indoctrination flight, we made several bombing runs on Bird Island, a very small island northwest of Oahu. After expending our ordnance load, we headed out for some air combat maneuvering against an A-4 jet from Head-

quarters and Headquarters Squadron 24.

This is where the flight really got fun—for Fokker that is. In pursuing the A-4, we were, at times, pulling upwards of five “Gs” (five times the force gravity). In doing so, Fokker easily turned my stomach inside out, outside in, upside down and every other way you can think of! Needless to say I had to break out the barf bag. At one point during a sweeping turn maneuver, the entire right side of my body was being pressed smack up against the right bulkhead of the cockpit. I had

the dry heaves, and I couldn’t move. Rest assured this may have been fun for Fokker but it surely wasn’t fun for me! After about an hour, we returned to home base.

After we landed and taxied back to the VMFA-212 hangar, I received the traditional toss into Kaneohe Bay which caught me completely by surprise. After they fished me out of the water, they slapped a new name tag onto my flight suit. They gave me the handle “Supersonic Grunt.” I was very honored to receive this name tag with my new handle as very few “mud Marines” can boast of having flown in an F-4 Phantom!

The worst part of my indoctrination flight was not the havoc the G-forces created in my stomach. Rather, it was the nauseating feeling I experienced for approximately a month afterward which was caused by my inner ear being traumatized by the excessive G-forces experienced during my hop.

Yes, I know Manfred Fokker Rietsch very well—he gave me the flight of my life.

LtCol John K. Williams, USMC (Ret)  
Fairfax Station, Va.

### Marine Color Guard Not Following Proper Protocol

I have been subscribing to *Leatherneck* almost the entire time since I graduated from Parris Island in 1968. I generally read or at least look closely at all articles in the magazine. As a Marine Corps League detachment commandant as well as commander of the detachment color guard and honor guard, I am particularly interested in any published photos of those details.

On page 29 in the July issue, under the “Passing the Word” section, there was an article titled “New Home for Wounded Marine Marks Organization’s 100th Build.” It was a very good article about a worthy cause, accompanied by a photograph of a Marine color guard as part of the dedication ceremony for Operation FINALLY HOME.

The photograph description identified it as a presentation of the colors during the National Anthem, which is pretty well verified by the fact that all of the civilians in the photo were shown with their right hands over their hearts. The problem, which is very obvious in the photo, is that the Marine color guard, whether active duty or reserve duty, is not following proper protocol. The Marine Corps flag is correctly in “Salute,” the right rifle guard [while looking directly at the photo], is correctly at “Present Arms,” however, the left rifle guard is incorrectly still at “Right Shoulder Arms.”

The assumption here is that he missed

the "Present Arms" command by the color guard commander. Not good on his part (needs more practice or needs to pay better attention), and also not good on the part of the *Leatherneck* staffer that apparently didn't catch it as part of the editing process. I have the feeling that you will receive many comments on this from observant Marine vets.

Overall a great magazine, keep up the good work.

Cpl Dick "Reb" Bienvenu  
USMC, RVN 1968-69  
New Melle, Mo.

The picture on page 29 of the July issue shows a Marine color guard as the National Anthem is being sung. The Marine on the right of the picture is still at "Present Arms" as should be. The Marine on the left is still at "Right Shoulder Arms."

Sgt Earl Maddalena  
USMC, 1953-57  
Daphne, Ala.

Please refer to page 29 of the July issue of *Leatherneck*. At the top of the page is a picture of a Marine color guard at "Present Arms." I am confused as to what in the h--- is going on? One guard is at "Present Arms," the other is at "Right Shoulder

Arms" and the Marine Corps colors are not dipped. Also, it appears that most of the civilians are at "Present Arms" (hands over their hearts). I think you could have picked a better picture.

Thanks for letting me ventilate.  
Capt W.H. Parker III  
USMC, 1954-67  
Norfolk, Va.

I enjoyed the article about new homes for wounded Marines in the July issue. I noticed in the photo on page 29 that showed the color guard that the Marine next to the American flag is still at "Shoulder Arms" while the Marine next to the Marine Corps flag is at "Present Arms." Is this something new or a big mistake?

Richard Bennett  
Macon, Ga.

• *The Marine made a mistake and we missed it. Thank you to our readers who pointed it out.—Editor.*

#### Operation Yo-Yo

In the "Sea Stories" department of the May issue there was a humorous article [Rocking and Rolling] describing Corporal Norm Spilleth's experience aboard  
[continued on page 64]

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# In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

## LIMBE, CAMEROON U.S. Marines, Cameroonian Soldiers Train to Fight Illicit Trafficking

In the humid, lush jungle of Limbe, Cameroon, 18 Marines with Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force—Crisis Response—Africa shared tactics and skills with more than 80 soldiers from the Forces Fusiliers Marins et Palmeurs de Combat (FORFUMAPCO) Cameroonian Armed Forces, from June 6 to July 8.

The mission supported the prevention of illicit activity—human trafficking, drugs and weapon trafficking—in the Central African region. The Marines of SPMAGTF—CR—AF spent time training Cameroonian soldiers in weapon safety, fire team formations, patrolling tactics and techniques, and fire and movement drills on a live-fire range.

“We are covering ambushes, as well as tactical site exploitations, and that transfers to the stopping of vehicles and personnel, which is a problem at some of the

locations’ borders,” said First Lieutenant Moises E. Navas, Theater Security Cooperation Team 1 Lead, SPMAGTF—CR—AF. “This will give them the tools and tactics to be able to help prevent the illicit trafficking. By sharing our tactics and procedures involving fire teams and patrols, we can help support FORFUMAPCO in the prevention of illicit activity in the surrounding area.”

“This helps us increase more of our operational capacities,” said Captain Kome Devine Kome, the commander of the Cameroon Marines, who participated in the training. “We benefit from this by using other proven techniques.”

Marines with 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment used practical application to teach the Cameroonian soldiers.

“They see what we do and they can adapt and incorporate it into their doctrine,” said Navas. “We see what they do and how they operate in this kind of environment. The past decade, we have

been fighting in a different type of terrain and these gentlemen have been fighting in heavy, thick jungle.”

Communication was vital to this particular training mission. Interpreters helped with the classes and the Cameroonians were eager and ready to learn the skills and techniques the U.S. Marines shared with them.

“Our chief of naval operations called it a ‘game-changer’ because by using what has been taught to them, our military has become that much more proficient,” said Kome.

Cpl Alexander Mitchell, USMC

## POHAKULOA TRAINING AREA, HAWAII

### Recon Marines, USAF Special Ops Hone Humanitarian Skills

When disaster strikes, most people observe from the outside. They cringe, they pity, they pray.

Some brave men and women, however,



Cpl Jeremy Osteen, a squad leader with SPMAGTF—CR—AF, runs behind a Cameroonian soldier with FORFUMAPCO as they conduct a buddy rush on the range in Limbe, Cameroon, July 1. Marines shared tactics, techniques and skills to help combat illicit trafficking in the region.

CPL ALEXANDER MITCHELL, USMC

choose not to be casual observers. They are the volunteer force that responds to emergencies, like Force Reconnaissance Marines with III Marine Expeditionary Force and special tactics airmen with 353rd Special Operations Group, Air Force Special Operations Command.

As part of Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2016, these specially trained Marines and airmen teamed up during a humanitarian assistance and disaster response exercise at Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii, July 8-9, to ensure they are ready to respond when confronted with the next calamity.

The mission began after sunset in the chilly hills of the training area. Under the cover of darkness, a team of recon Marines with full combat loads crammed themselves into sport utility vehicles. Load-bearing vests were filled with magazines of 5.56 mm rounds and packs bulged with supplies to sustain the Marines for multiple nights at altitudes of more than 6,000 feet above sea level. The vehicles sped along a lonesome dirt road, kicking up dust.

Finally, the tactical operations center radioed a two-minute warning to the team leader, indicating that they needed to be at their reconnaissance point, ready to exit the vehicles. When they ground to a halt, the Marines clambered out, lowering their night-vision goggles to eye level and peering out at the eerie green landscape. Throughout the night, they trudged along a hilly course through the brush, gathering information about the landscape and passing it to the team of special tactics airmen. In the morning, the airmen would use this information to determine the best way of reaching those who required aid.

Captain Joshua Winters, platoon commander, 2d Platoon, Force Reconnaissance Company, III MEF, said his Marines embedded 24 hours before the airmen insertion to provide the Air Force Special Operations Forces with critical information to mitigate risk during the operation.

As part of the exercise, Marines from other units training at Pohakuloa Training Area were the "victims."

Using the intelligence gathered by III MEF, the Air Force mission commander decided the best option to recover the simulated victims would be to infiltrate by high-altitude, low-opening airborne jumps. Eighteen Special Tactics airmen infiltrated the affected area and immediately moved to the disaster location. One team traveled 25 kilometers by all-terrain vehicles to take control of a remote airfield, while the other team concurrently patrolled by foot through rugged, rocky terrain to recover and provide emergency medical assistance to victims of the disaster. If medical assistance was not needed,



CPL NATALIE DILLON, USMC

**Marines dressed in civilian clothing wait for simulated aid from Air Force special tactics airmen at an improvised landing zone near the Pohakuloa Training Area, Hawaii, during RIMPAC, July 9.**

the teams called for material aid to be brought to victims.

Once the team of special tactics airmen took control of the airfield, they were able to provide quick recovery of "victims" affected by the simulated catastrophe. They established an austere airfield, opened a forward area refueling point and provided critical air traffic control duties for aircraft in the area.

With the airfield open and secured, the air assets were able to begin evacuating critical patients and bringing aid to the victims. In addition, the rotary wing aircraft were then able to insert the special tactics airmen into the most critically affected areas, providing an air-enabled line of supply to those in need.

Immediately after the airmen exited their UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, they moved to triage their victims to treat them accordingly. The simulated injuries varied from lost and broken limbs to unconscious patients. The airmen moved back and forth, collecting and treating patients and controlling the air traffic to evacuate the patients to advanced medical care.

Within nine hours of taking control of the air assets at Bradshaw Army Airfield, the teams had rescued and provided relief to 75 victims and delivered more than 1,500 pounds of aid.

As a role player, Private First Class Jason Murillo, an intelligence specialist with Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3, First Marine Aircraft Wing, said the relief teams communicated well with each other and with the simulated victims.

"They came in, they knew what they were doing, and they treated and removed

us from the situation pretty quickly," Murillo said.

RIMPAC provided the Marines of III MEF and the airmen of the 353rd SOG an opportunity to showcase their partnership and benefit from their ongoing relationship.

"The relationship that we've built with Air Force Special Operations helps us carry out missions like this more effectively," said Winters.

Few Marines and airmen can say they've had the chance to work together extensively. Yet, when it comes to helping those who need the Armed Forces the most, joint operations can be the difference between life and death.

"The speed in which our joint force can answer to the range of military operations is substantial," said Captain John Rulien, USAF, mission commander for the task force. "We've been investing into this concept for some time, aiming at creating increased contingency response value for our commanders and now we're using the RIMPAC exercise platform to capture that value and formalize it."

Twenty-six nations, more than 50 ships and submarines, more than 200 aircraft and 25,000 personnel participated in RIMPAC from June 30 to Aug. 4, in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California. The world's largest international maritime exercise, held annually for the past 25 years, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity that helps participants foster and sustain the cooperative relationships that are critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans.

Cpl Natalie Dillon, USMC

Headed ashore for sustainment training, Marines and Sailors with the 13th MEU and Boxer Amphibious Ready Group file into an MV-22B Osprey aboard USS Boxer (LHD-4) in the Arabian Gulf, June 13.



CPL ALVIN PUJOLS, USMC

## ARABIAN GULF “Fighting 13th” Conducts Sustainment Training

The Marines and Sailors of the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit, also known as the “Fighting 13th,” loaded onto watercraft and aircraft in the Arabian Gulf to begin sustainment training in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations, June 12. After conducting operations in the Gulf of Aden, elements of the 13th MEU’s Western Pacific Deployment 16-1 went ashore at an undisclosed location to conduct Marine Air-Ground Task Force-level training for approximately three weeks.

“The 13th MEU is conducting collective skills training for the air combat element, ground combat element and logistics combat element, as well as focusing on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear [CBRN] decontamination to culminate in a combined arms live-fire exercise,” said Captain Matthew P. Brousseau, an operations officer with the 13th MEU.

In preparation for the training evolution, roughly 700 Marines, coming from each of the MEU’s major subordinate commands, disembarked with the equipment necessary to accomplish their tasks.

“We will be offloading various kinds of tactical vehicles, such as [humvees],



SGT BRIAUNA BIRL, USMC

**Cpl Ron Montgomery crawls to the top of a sand hill during a PT session during 13th MEU’s sustainment training at an undisclosed location, June 21.**

MTVRs [Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement], light-armored vehicles and forklifts,” said Gunnery Sergeant Thaddeus M. King, logistics chief with the 13th MEU. The ground combat element, logistics combat element and air combat element all have a role to play while conducting missions, so the MEU sustainment training was geared toward their specific responsibilities.

“Each subordinate command has their own training timeline specific to their missions. The battalion landing team will be conducting live-fire ranges; the combat logistics battalion will be providing support in the form of transportation, establishing an ammunition holding area and medical station; and the air combat element will be conducting insertion of personnel, gear and other assets needed to



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complete the training,” said King, prior to the training evolution.

As the spearhead of the MEU, the ground combat element must exercise all of its assets to stay sharp and lethal. Sustainment training like this provides an opportunity for all of the pieces of the ground combat element to maintain their combat effectiveness.

“The ground combat element will be offloading their battalion landing team forward ... 81 mm mortars, 120 mm mortars, a rifle platoon, light armored reconnaissance platoon, combined anti-armor team and amphibious assault vehicles,” said Brousseau, in June, before the training was conducted. While the live-fire ranges and maneuvers took place, the logistics combat element focused on supporting the ground combat element and air combat element.

“The combat logistics battalion will be providing logistics support by setting up water production for fresh water and establishing an ammunition holding area,” Brousseau said. “Their focus is to hone their own skills by establishing a beach support area as well as a logistics support area.”

The non-infantry specific Marines conducted support-based training. Gen-

erator mechanics offloaded to ensure that the tents on the ground had air conditioning for the Marines between training events and water production specialists to ensure the availability of fresh water.

The logistics combat element wasn’t the only element providing support. Along with conducting internal training, the air combat element inserted troops, gear and equipment during training.

The Fighting 13th brought the sustainment training to a close with a culminating live-fire event, which required integration of all three elements for a MAGTF-sized training evolution.

“The 13th MEU has been exceptional during WESTPAC 16-1, between conducting Hawaii sustainment training, conducting Exercise Ssang Yong 2016 in South Korea, Exercise Eager Lion 2016 in Jordan, as well as sustainment training in Djibouti,” said Brousseau.

The 13th MEU’s sustainment training in the U.S. 5th Fleet and Central Command areas of responsibility allowed Marines and Sailors to maintain proficiency and combat readiness while deployed with *Boxer* Amphibious Ready Group during WESTPAC 16-1.

Cpl Alvin Pujols, USMC

## INDIAN HEAD, MD.

### Gas Mask Drills Ensure Readiness For CBIRF Marines and Sailors

“Gas, gas, gas!” the first sergeant yelled out. Shortly after that shout, the sounds of Velcro and hard exhales were audible as the Marines and Sailors expertly donned their M53 Chemical-Biological Protective Masks at Naval Support Facility Indian Head, Md., July 7.

In fewer than nine seconds, members of Chemical Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) pulled their masks out of carrying cases, squeezed them onto their heads, cinched the straps holding the masks tight to their faces, cleared simulated contaminants out of the masks with hard exhalations, and raised their hands in the air to signify they had properly donned their masks.

During these battle drills, Marines and Sailors who fail at this basic defense measure must re-test until successful. Failure is not an option for the nation’s premier chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-explosives (CBRNE) response force.

CBIRF Marines and Sailors have found innovative ways, like gas mask drills, to hone basic skills required of the unique



Marines with 13th MEU set the elevation of an 81 mm mortar during a live-fire range conducted during sustainment training at an undisclosed location, June 23. The 13th MEU deployed to maintain regional security in the U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations.

SGT BRIANA BIRL, USMC



SSGT SANTIAGO G. COLON JR., USMC

**CBIRF Marines and Sailors participate in an all-hands gas mask drill at the Naval Support Facility Indian Head, Md., July 7.**

response unit. At any moment, they can be called upon to respond to crises ranging from natural disasters such as tornadoes to a 10-kiloton nuclear detonation. The very nature of their response capabilities requires the Marines and Sailors to be knowledgeable about their equipment.

“At the basic level, every member of CBIRF needs to be able to quickly go from no protection in a nonhostile environment to the basic protection from contamination,” said Sergeant Kota R. Gorman, an instructor at CBIRF’s Downey Responder Training Facility. “We have other equipment such as our [self-contained breathing apparatus] or our [powered air-purifying respirators] that can be used depending on the severity of the contaminated area, but the basic for everyone is the M53 gas mask.”

CBIRF conducts periodic, random drills during the workday, requiring every member to have their mask and carrying case with them at all times. CBIRF leaders will randomly yell out “gas, gas, gas!” as the Marines and Sailors are conducting their regular business. It’s a common command for members of the unique unit.

What is uncommon is why CBIRF is absolutely adamant about proficiency with CBRNE gear.

“CBIRF is the only unit in the Marine Corps trained to respond to the worst scenarios imaginable here and abroad,” said Dr. Erick Swartz, senior scientist with CBIRF. “At any moment, CBIRF can and might be called on to save lives ... there is no room for delay or failure. CBIRF must be ready at all times.”

When directed, CBIRF forward-deploys and/or responds with minimal warning to CBRNE threat or event in order to

assist local, state or federal agencies and the geographic combatant commanders in the conduct of CBRNE response or consequence management operations, providing capabilities for command and control; agent detection and identification; search, rescue and contamination; and emergency medical care for contaminated personnel.

SSgt Santiago G. Colon Jr., USMC

**UTÖ ISLAND, SWEDEN  
II MEF Marines Train With  
NATO Allies During BALTOPS**

Several NATO allies and partner nations, including more than 200 U.S. Marines, defeated a simulated enemy force and took control of the Baltic Sea during an exercise at Utö Island, Sweden, June 10-13.

The three-day training event was part of Exercise BALTOPS 16, which enabled Marines to work with foreign militaries and operate in a simulated battlefield while building a foundation for potential future operations.

“BALTOPS 16 is significant in building the NATO alliance because it gives us an opportunity to meet our NATO counterparts face-to-face and work with them in a realistic scenario,” said Henry Baylis, a student in the United Kingdom’s Royal Marine initial officer training.

Exercises like BALTOPS are crucial for improving relationships, increasing interoperability and working cohesively while training with other militaries.

“When Marines come together collectively with foreign nations, we can adapt and overcome any challenge or threat that’s been presented before us,” said Corporal Stephen Mills, a squad leader with 3d Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment.

“It has an overarching theme, which is to let our NATO allies know that we’re there for them,” said Mills.

The realistic combat scenarios helped each nation sharpen their combined skill sets.

“It also shows other nations that we’re stronger than we ever were, and we’re going to continue to fight to be better,” said Mills.

BALTOPS is an annual training exercise which brings together 17 NATO allies and partner nations to improve combat and crisis response readiness, build and sustain relationships and enhance stability in the Baltic Sea region.

II MEF



LCPL ASHLEY LAWSON, USMC

**A Marine with II MEF keeps watch during a training event at Utö Island, Sweden, in June. Part of Exercise BALTOPS 16, this three-day event allowed Marines to work together with NATO allies and partner nations to defeat a simulated enemy force and take control of the Baltic Sea.**

# Force in Not-So-Readiness

## The Mobilization of the Marine Reserve During the Korean War



Marine reservists eagerly prepare to board USNS *General Walker* (T-AP-125), bound for the war in Korea. The rapid deployment of the Marines to Korea could not have succeeded without the infusion of the Marine Reserve, mobilized shortly after the North Korean invasion.

By MSgt Bradford A. Wineman  
USMCR

*Editor's note: The following article is a finalist in the newly established Leatherneck Writing Contest. Major Rick Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest open to enlisted Marines through the Marine Corps Association and Foundation; more than 70 entries were received. Upcoming issues of Leatherneck will feature other finalists.*

On June 25, 1950, the North Korean People's Army invaded South Korea, crossing the 38th parallel and prompting the United States to take immediate and drastic military action to prevent Communist forces from taking over the entire Korean Peninsula. The U.S. established a unified United Nations command under the leadership of the legendary General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, USA, to repel the enemy in-

vasion. The success of Operation Chromite (the amphibious landing at Inchon) and MacArthur's subsequent victories in his drive to the Yalu River that fall inspired many to offer high praises for the Marines in the task force, whose numbers were made up of numerous activated reservists. Commanding General, Fleet Marine Forces Pacific, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, later the 20th Commandant of the Marine Corps, argued that, "if it had not been for the mobilization of the Reserve to bring the remaining units of the 1st Division to full strength, I would not have been able to recommend to GEN MacArthur that he request the assignment of the 1st Division to the Far East Command for his desired employment at Inchon which turned the tide of defeat to one of victory, to the lasting glory and prestige of the U.S. Marine Corps." However, the battlefield triumphs and subsequent acclaim of the Marines in Korea have overshadowed the structural and institutional failures in

the mobilization of the Marine Reserve during the conflict. Those failures, short-sightedness, and miscalculations on the application of the reserve nearly undermined the success of the Marine Corps in the Korean War.

### State of the Reserve Post World War II

When constructing his plan for Operation Chromite, GEN MacArthur requested a war-strength division of Marines to provide one of the main forces for the operation. The post-World War II Marine Corps, however, was woefully unprepared to meet this demand. In June 1950, the active-duty Marine Corps consisted of only 74,279 men. In the preceding five years, the Department of Defense had reduced the size of the active component and expanded the Marine Corps Reserve. This reduced the cost of funding a large active force, while keeping a sizeable reserve which could be called in a time of national emergency (most likely against the Soviet Union). Of the more than 74,000 on active duty, only 40,346 were part of the Fleet Marine Force, the Marine Corps' operating force, split between the East and West coasts. The 1stMarDiv, later tasked as part of GEN MacArthur's invasion force, could muster only a fraction of personnel needed, with most of its battalions having only two rifle companies. The Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Clifton B. Cates, informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that getting the Division to the manning levels needed would require the recall of the Marine Reserve.

On July 19, 1950, President Harry S. Truman officially authorized the call to active duty for the Marine Reserve, but in doing so, he instigated a clumsy process with flaws that predated Korea, beginning with the defects in the post-war reserve system.

After WW II, the Marine Corps restructured its manpower organization to reduce wartime troop levels while still retaining a state of readiness for any Cold War



**Marines step ashore at “Charlie Pier” in Inchon Harbor, where they board waiting trains for the 4½ hour trip to the First Marine Division in Korea. The quickly assembled 1stMarDiv had sailed to Korea with nearly half of its roster composed of reservists.**

contingencies by moving the bulk of their forces into the reserve. By 1950, the Marine Reserve had grown to nearly twice the size of the active-duty Marine component (74,279 active-duty Marines and 128,959 reserve Marines).

MacArthur’s operational planners originally rejoiced at the number of reservists available, but demurred when they realized that nearly three quarters of these forces were members of the Volunteer Reserve, the equivalent of the present-day Inactive Ready Reserve. These were reservists who were not required to attend any scheduled military training; they simply had to maintain their updated contact information for recall in case of a national emergency. The remaining 33,527 men of the Organized Reserve, who, in theory, had been training one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer, would prove to have an inconsistent level of readiness for deployment and combat. Getting these unsuspecting and unprepared reservists ready for war would be a greater challenge than expected.

### Mustering the Reserve

After the President’s call for mobilization, 105 Marine Reserve stations across the nation scrambled to muster their units, screen administrative and medical records, and arrange for transportation to



**Family and friends lingered on a train platform in Indiana to say goodbye to Marine reservists who were called to fight in Korea, 1950. By 1950, the Marine Reserve had grown to nearly twice the size of the active-duty Marine component.**

the staging facilities at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C. The rapid decisions made by the White House and the Commandant gave the base commanders of the two installations almost no time to prepare the reception of such large body of troops. On Aug. 6, Camp Pendleton received more than 7,000 Marines and Sailors within a 96-hour period. Incoming Marines slept in overcrowded Quonset huts that were infested with rattlesnakes and skunks. Several billeting areas had no mess halls to feed them. In the areas that did have temporary dining facilities erected, the quality of food was so poor that those troops who could afford it bought their meals at the post exchange. Reservists and their families also complained that the local businesses purposely raised their prices to gouge the incoming troops for pressing, laundry, shoe repair and hotel rates. After the initial shock of the ramshackle facilities at Camp Pendleton, most Marines were informed that they would have to move once again as the task force’s manning crisis would create

more administration and logistics turmoil.

The varying levels of readiness of the incoming reserve units and the pressing need to meet the staffing requirements for 1stMarDiv forced reserve units to disband within days of their arrival. MacArthur's staff had to make a difficult choice. Whatever unit cohesion and command structure these reserve companies and battalions had developed during years of training would have to be sacrificed to the need to fill holes of the undermanned and unprepared 1stMarDiv. The reserve Marines who flooded into Camp Pendleton arrived with a broad and inconsistent range of experience and preparation for a combat deployment requiring the Division staff to vet all the reserve unit rosters to determine the most qualified personnel to fit the numerous unfilled billets. The pressing timeline, however, forced them to cut corners and expedite the process as quickly as possible. Staff officers scoured thousands of service records books and divided the incoming reservists into two simple categories—combat ready and non-combat ready. The criteria staff used to determine combat readiness was equally simplistic. Any member of the Organized Reserve who had served for two years and had attended one summer camp and 72 drills or two summer camps and 36 drills was placed in the combat ready category. That also included veterans who had at least 90 days service. The haste and disorganization of several units arriving to Camp Pendleton caused many reservists to arrive without their service records, making the process even more difficult. Marine historian Ernest Giusti commented that with the loss of personnel records, “the margin of error for the selection of reservists for combat was increased, MOSs were scrambled, and the payment of some personnel was delayed by almost two months.”

### Combat Ready?

Marines placed in the combat ready category only met the meaning of that concept on paper. The hurried staffs still needed more assurance that the men they assigned into this classification were indeed qualified to fight. With no other means to make such a crucial determination, the board selection members chose to rely solely on interviewing each of the individual Ma-

rines themselves to assess their combat readiness. One veteran observing the rushed process noted, “About 15 Regulars in the classification section interview and classify the men as they come in. The section puts through about 60 men in an hour.” The interviewers relied on the

but did not want to fight could self-classify themselves as non-combat ready in the interview and take their names out of consideration with no professional stigma attached to their record.

Those reservists with the most experience often were placed into billets outside of their specialty in order to fill the manning requirements for the Division. One observer commented brazenly about the haphazard nature of assigning billets to unqualified Marines in the name of expediency, “Naturally everyone isn't satisfied with his new job MOS. There is always some truck driver who feels he'd make a better cook and some cook who feels he'd make a better truck driver.”

Remarkably, nearly half of the Organized Reservists called to duty in the nation's time of crisis were not properly prepared for combat. A portion of the unprepared, about 25 percent, had not even attended basic training, which placed them in the “Recruit Class” designation for the non-deployable. Thousands of others had little experience beyond boot camp or had been away from the active service for so long that the monthly drills and annual training conducted by their units left them inadequately prepared for combat. Of those reservists placed in the non-combat ready category, some wanted to deploy but were considered not adequately ready by drilling standard while others admitted of their own volition that they did not personally feel prepared to fight, regardless of the qualifications reflected in their personnel record books.

While staffs hurried through interviews to find the most ready personnel to fill the deployment rosters, the reservists waiting to be screened were left to their own devices to fill their time. One reservist noted, “All of the men are waiting to be classified, and while they are waiting, they keep busy. A little close-order drill is good for discipline and coordination, they shine shoes, clean weapons, check the pack, oil the bayonet, and then they write home.” Those individual

reservists who were assigned to deploy with 1stMarDiv units now had to endure an equally disorganized training regimen. Both the reservists and the Marines who trained them worried openly that the training being offered was too rushed and inadequate. Training packages were un-



**GEN Douglas MacArthur, the commander in chief of U.N. forces in Korea, in the front seat on the passenger side, and MGen Oliver P. Smith, commanding general of the 1stMarDiv, seated in the center of the second row, depart on a tour of Yellow Beach, Inchon, Korea.**



**MG Edward M. Almond, commanding general of the U.S. Army's X Corps, left, and LtGen Lemuel C. Shepherd, go ashore for an inspection tour of the Inchon area aboard a motor launch from USS Mount McKinley (AGC-7).**

individual to make their case as to why they should or should not be considered for assignment to active duty. This led several of the more unprepared interviewees to exaggerate or lie about their experience or qualifications if they did want to deploy while others who may have been qualified



USMC

**Marines from First Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment, 1stMarDiv advance through the streets of Inchon, east of Seoul, Korea.**

even, uncoordinated and could not adjust to the wide variety of preparedness of these hybrid units of regulars and reservists. Most of the training, therefore, resembled that of boot camp, teaching (or re-teaching) the Marines the very basics, rather than attempt the more advanced intricacies of unit infantry maneuvers or specific MOS preparation.

The compressed schedule of Operation Chromite would not allow it. There was no time to compensate for the training that the reservists should have received during their reserve drills as many of these units were tasked to deploy to Korea in less than four weeks.

At the conclusion of the mass screening process, the boards determined that only 50 percent of the Organized Reservists interviewed—2,891 Marines—were considered combat ready for 1st Marine Division. The hastily assembled 1stMarDiv sailed for Japan then to Korea in early September with nearly half of its roster composed of reservists. But the dependence upon the reserves continued at the same hectic pace even after MacArthur departed with his invasion force. The mobilization effort now shifted to 2dMarDiv in Camp Lejeune, which struggled to quickly fill the ranks of another Regimental Combat Team, and potentially a third,

from the now depleted Organized Reserve. Left with no other option, the Commandant issued a call-up from the Volunteer Reserve, those Marine reservists who had not been actively drilling but had been kept on a contact list for activation in a time of national military emergency. Many had not touched a weapon in several years. On Aug. 5, 60 percent of the Volunteer Reserve, nearly 54,000 men, received notice that they would be mobilized for service. During October alone, 21,343 Volunteer Reservists reported to Camp Lejeune under mobilization orders with the peak reaching 52,305 by May 1951. Eighty percent of the reservists assigned to the 2dMarDiv came from the Volunteer Reserve. The call to active duty for reservists would continue until February 1951. Reservists would maintain between 30-50 percent of the total Marine forces in Korea until the end of 1951. No one at Headquarters Marine Corps, however, had planned on going this deep into the manpower pool to meet the manning needs for the conflict.

### **Bitterness in the Ranks**

While Marine reservists, as a whole, distinguished themselves during the Korean War, many of them served with a sense of bitterness or complete reluctance. The surprise of the rapid mobilization of

reserve units across the nation found many reservists not only unprepared to go to war, but also unwilling to do so. Randy and Roxanne Mills' study of a Marine Reserve company from Indiana noted that several parents flooded the offices of their Congressmen begging not to have their sons deploy to Korea. More experienced reservists accused the Marine Corps of a "bait and switch" policy as they left the service after WW II and were persuaded to join the reserve with the promise of having to only attend an occasional weekend drill while maintaining their rank and time served. Staff Sergeant Robert S. Gray, for example, wrote to the editor of *Leatherneck* in February 1951, that he had entered the Inactive Reserve after completed recruiting duty with the understanding the he would only be mobilized "in time of war or national emergency." After he was activated for the Korea, he questioned if the conflict (which he labeled a "United Nations Police Action") met the criteria for a national emergency and demanded a discharge for breach of contract.

SSgt Gray's letter met with acrimonious response in the Corps' professional journals, exemplifying the unforeseen social and cultural repercussions of the rushed and disorganized mobilization. Stories of

**Marines used scaling ladders to storm ashore at Inchon during the amphibious invasion on Sept. 15, 1950. It was one of the fastest operations on record, with waves of Marines almost tripping over one another.**



the reluctance of reservists to respond to the call-up and fulfill their duties initiated a backlash and growing divide among active-duty and reserve Marines. Critics of these jaded reservists loaded their rejoinders on the pages of the *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Leatherneck*, expressing their disgust and disappointment in their fellow Marines. One respondent lambasted those, “Inactive Reserves whose sole purpose was to protect their rank.” Another harped that, “Now somebody is shooting live ammo again and what happens? The Reserves, Inactive Reserves and their wives are crying.”

Regardless of the animosity, the Korean War experience did create a more cautious and self-interested attitude among many individual reservists after the war. Even the official history of the Marine Corps Reserve notes how the “call-up had created a measure of resentment in some areas,” and “prior service reservists, too, sometimes found themselves torn between loyalty to country and Corps and reluctance to place personal commitments—family responsibilities, chances for job advancement, and schooling—in jeopardy again by remaining in the Ready Reserve, subject to another call-up.”

In spite of all the missteps during the activation, the Marine Reserve still dis-

tinguished itself on the battlefields of Korea which leaves critics to assess how they accomplished these feats given the aforementioned chaos. In sum, it was the happenstance of the conflict’s timing, just five years after the end of WW II. Statistics show that 99 percent of the officers and 77.5 percent of the enlisted reservists mobilized for the Korean conflict had served in WW II. A 1952 *Marine Corps Gazette* article entitled “Keep ‘Em Combat Ready,” noted that many WW II veterans were ready, but the non-veterans knew very little and offered skill sets that limited them to be able to conduct interior guard duty. One is left to speculate that if the thousands of reservists who were activated had not benefitted from as much combat experience as they had, the Marines sent to Korea might have been ultimately undermined by the disordered process of mobilization and training and driven towards a path of tactical and operational failure.

The realists in the Marine Corps and Department of Defense who understood the luck they enjoyed from such a fortuitously veteran reserve force filtered through the public praises and understood the need for major changes to the structure and expectations of the Reserve. The most immediate reaction was the passage of

the Armed Forces Reserve Act of 1952 which, among its many changes in reaction to the failures of the Korea call-up, established three categories of reserve forces—ready, standby, and retired—subject to different liabilities for mobilization. Over the next decade, reformers from within the Corps rigorously addressed the dilemmas with the Reserve, using the Korean experience as the benchmark for failure from which to build new models for success. The details of these initiatives and reforms nearly all focused on the primary challenge of having the Reserve ready to go on short notice and called for both institutional changes and an emphasis on the preparedness of the individual reservist. The experience of the Marine Reserve during the Korean War continues to resonate today in the Iraq and Afghanistan context in which the reserve forces were hastily thrust into a challenging set of combat circumstances and the subsequent need to vigorously reassess their role in the national defense strategy.

*Author’s bio: MSgt Bradford A. Wineman, USMCR is an Enlisted Reserve Career Counselor for Reserve Affairs. As a civilian, he serves on the faculty of Marine Corps University.*





# USMC

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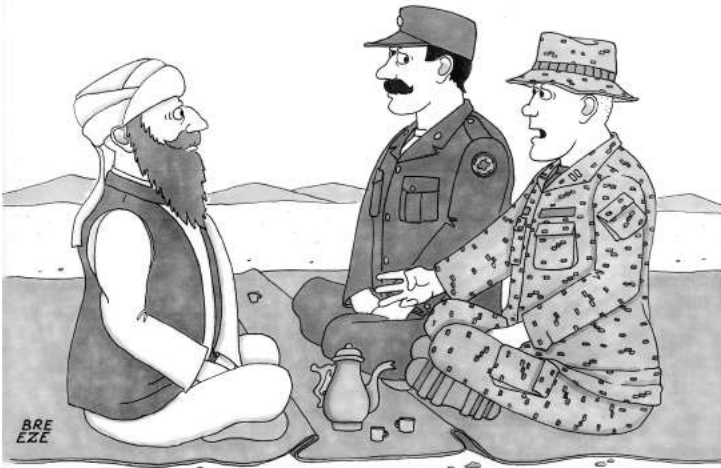
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# Leatherneck Laffs



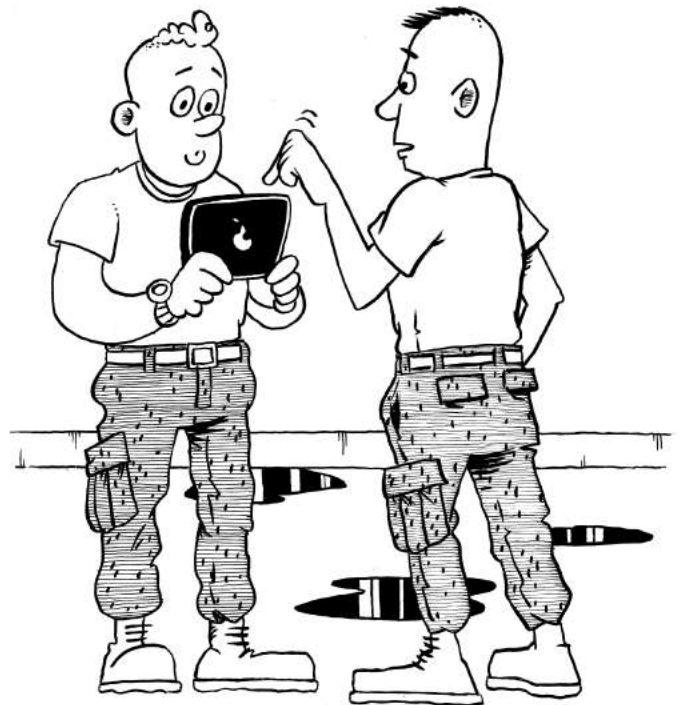
"Tell him I'll be back in three days when I can feel my legs again."



"The worst part of this job is the commute."



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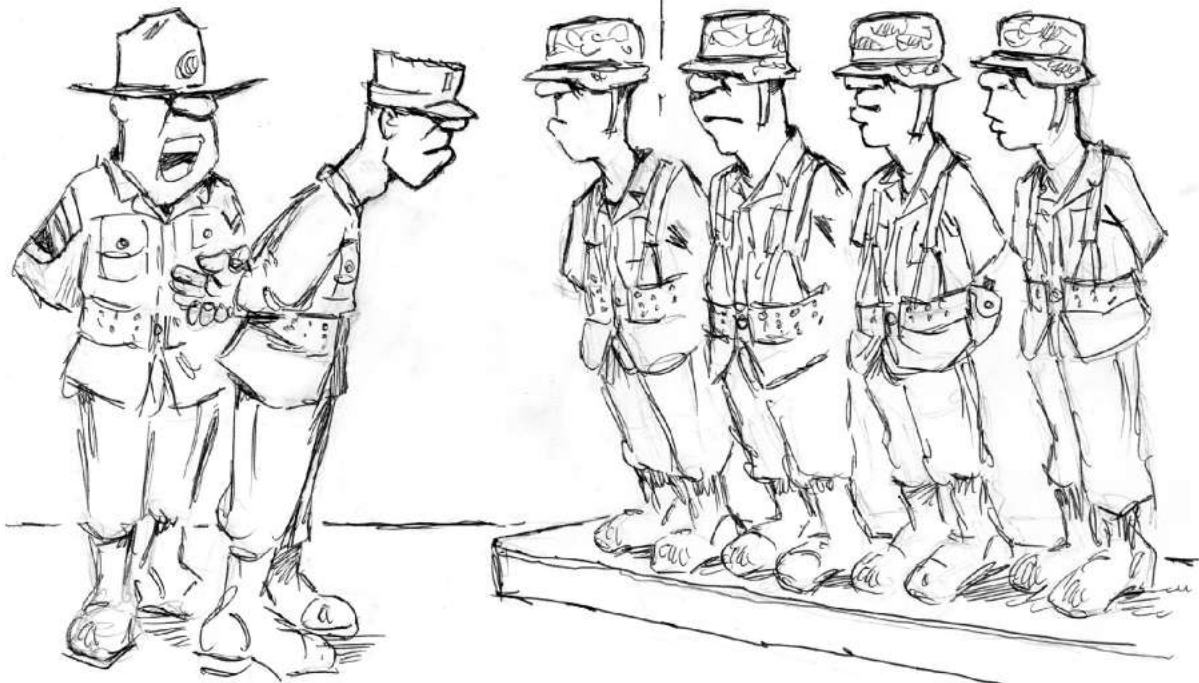


KILGORE

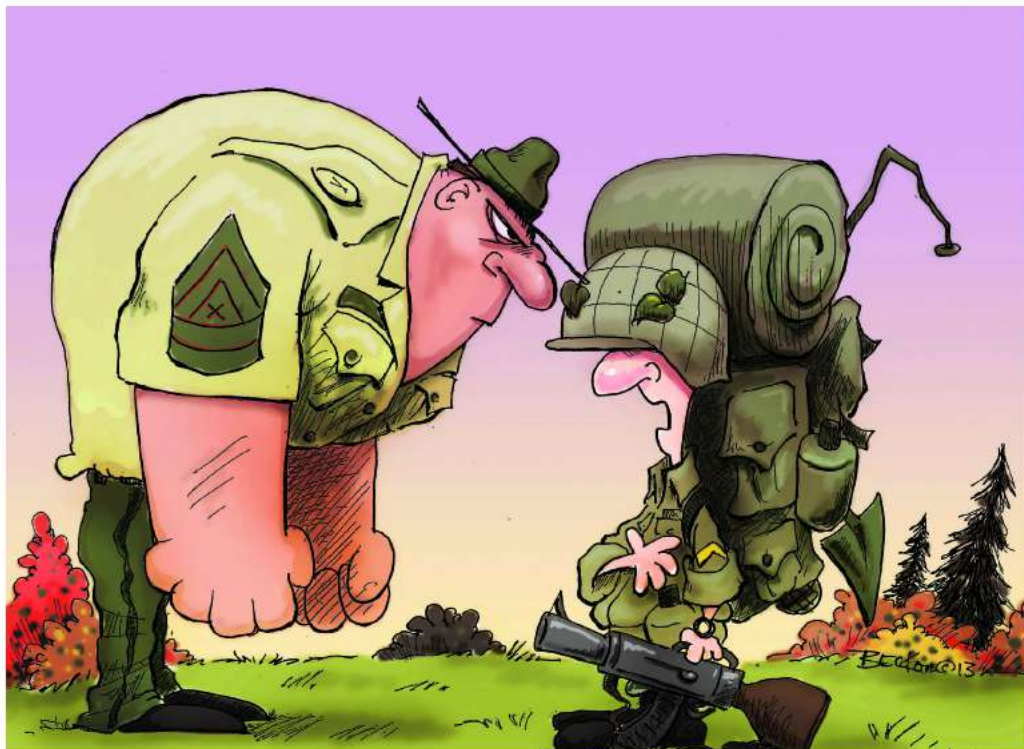
"Does this thing have a field day app?"

# BOOT CAMP

S.J. Stout



"Now, pick out the recruit who didn't salute you!"

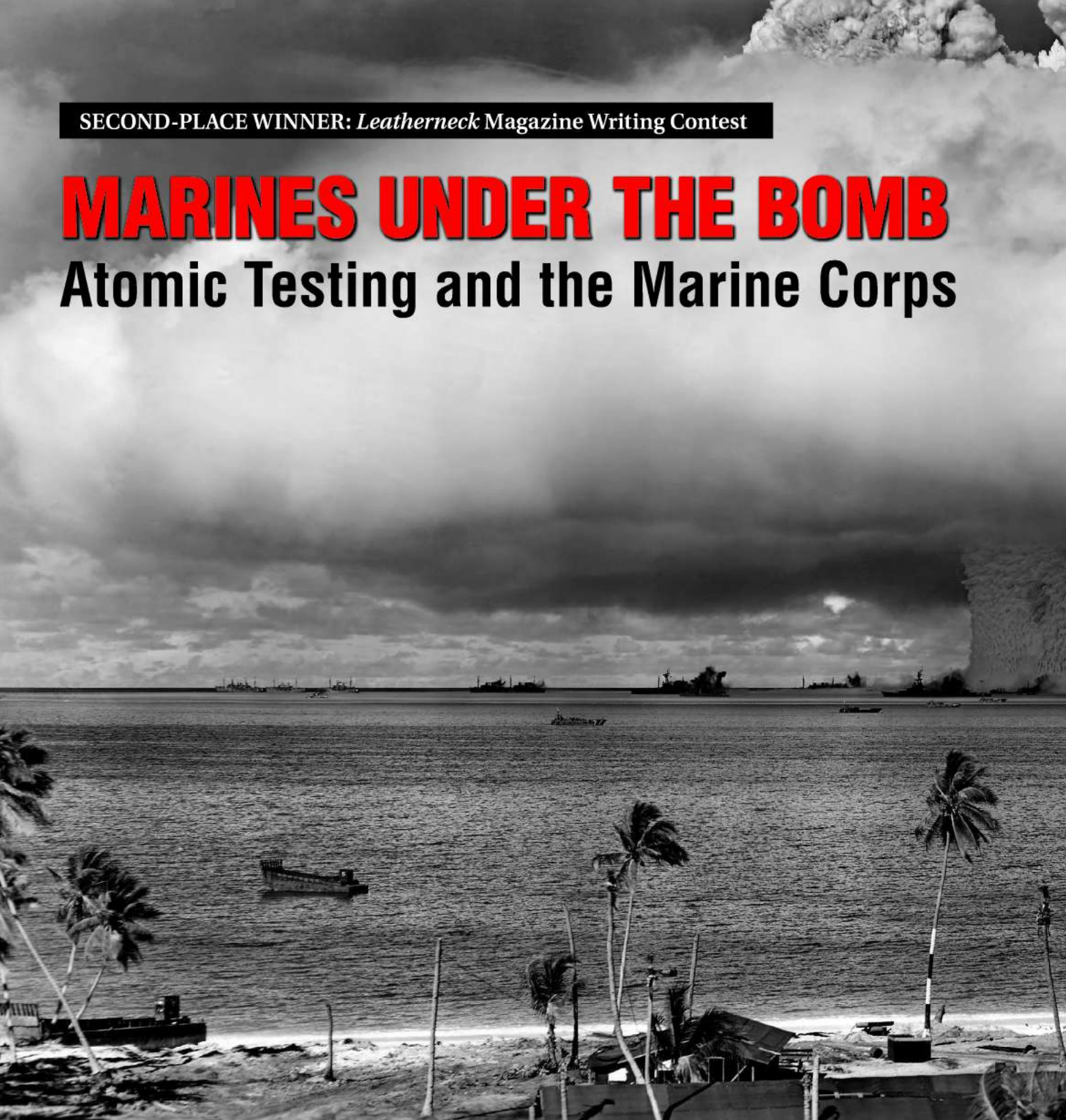


"My mom says bullying is not OK."

SECOND-PLACE WINNER: *Leatherneck* Magazine Writing Contest

# MARINES UNDER THE BOMB

## Atomic Testing and the Marine Corps



By Cpl Daniel Chandler, USMC

*Editor's note: The following article is the second-place winner of the newly established Leatherneck Writing Contest. Major Rick Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest open to enlisted Marines through the Marine Corps Association and Foundation; more than 70 entries were received. Upcoming issues of Leatherneck will feature contest finalists.*

**F**or decades, the United States Marine Corps has devoted consistent attention to training for an attack involving weapons of mass destruction, including chemical, biological and even nuclear weapons. Yet even with the overwhelming might and power displayed by thousands of nuclear tests, the threat of a nuclear attack—not to mention the ability to survive and fight in the context of a nuclear war—remains a subject largely underappreciated. Because of efforts to shroud the

nuclear science in layers of classified documents, fully appreciating the labors of the men who participated in the tests that gave us the knowledge to carry on the fight in the atomic era is difficult.

Only recently have enough written and visual documents been declassified for the American public to honor those on the front lines of the atomic testing grounds—including tens of thousands of Marines.

Beginning with the “Manhattan Project,” the pursuit of a nuclear weapon by the



United States has been carried out with utmost secrecy. Perhaps no other venture undertaken by humanity has been darkened with such mystery, even today, more than 70 years after the first nuclear detonation in Alamogordo, N.M.

Indeed, "Trinity," the code name for the first test, was publicly announced as an accidental munitions dump explosion. It was not until after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki explosions that the true nature of the Trinity test was revealed. Even after

**The Baker explosion off of Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands on July 25, 1946, resulted in a wide condensation cloud that soon disappeared to reveal the top of the water geyser, fittingly called the "cauliflower." The water released by the explosion was highly radioactive and contaminated many of the ships nearby. (DOD photo)**

victory over the Axis powers, secrecy in the nuclear field became characteristic of future testing as the United States continued to hone its capabilities, perfect its knowledge, and grow its nuclear stock.

For the Marine Corps, experience with nuclear testing stemmed directly from

the Department of the Navy, as Marines served on board the ships taking part in the first postwar testing. The tests took place in the vicinity of the Marshall Islands and provided the knowledge needed to place nuclear weapons into the framework of a new strategy for future warfighting.

## Operation Crossroads

The first round of testing was called Operation Crossroads. The objective was to discern the effect of a nuclear bomb on an enemy fleet—how many ships could be sunk, how much damage could the surviving ships endure and what effect would radiation have.

After World War II, there were ships no longer needed, and roughly 70 ships were anchored within a few miles of ground zero. After extensive preparation and documentation, two atom bombs were detonated: “Able” and “Baker.” Able detonated above the anchored fleet and had a negligible impact on the ships. According to the Defense Nuclear Agency’s “For the Record—A History of the Nuclear Test Personnel Review Program,” written by Abby A. Johnson, Baker, however, was an underwater burst that “bathed [the ships] in radioactive water spray and radioactive debris ... the surviving target fleet was too radiologically contaminated for many days for more than brief on-board activities.” Nevertheless, 12 of the ships were “so lightly contaminated that their crews remanned them and sailed them back to the United States.”

Marine Corps participation in Opera-

tion Crossroads is difficult to research, but total personnel in the operation was roughly 37,000 men, and it is possible that Marines are included in the count. Also, records of individual radiation dosage are available from all participating branches. Though incomplete (only 15 percent of all personnel were issued the “film strips” needed to gather radiation data), it records radiation dosage from a total of 550 Marines. If it is assumed that 15 percent of the Marines were recorded, then a total of roughly 3,667 Marines were present.

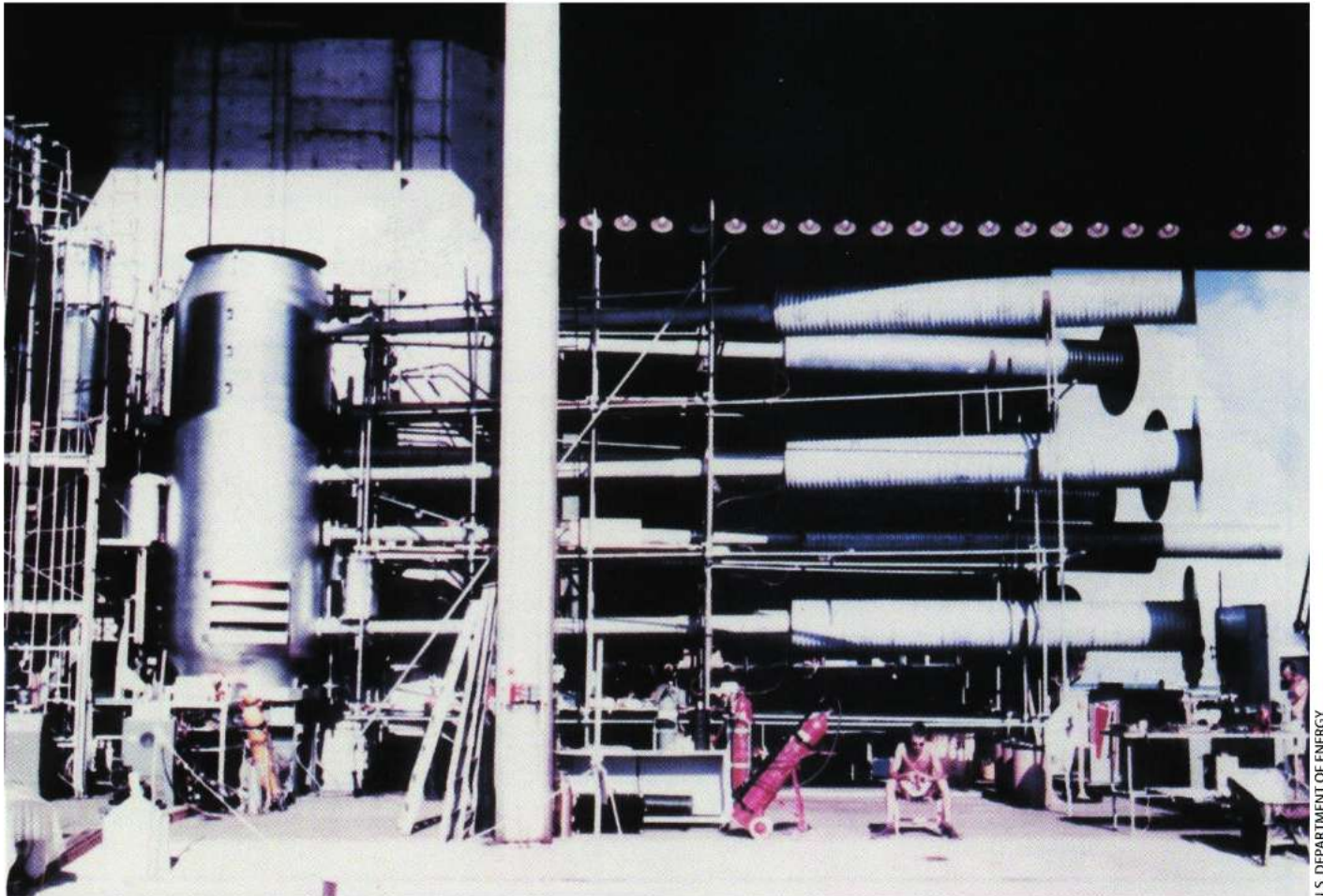
## Nevada Tests

The meticulous testing of nuclear weapons continued, slowly at first, then incrementally faster as tensions continued to build during the Cold War. Operations Sandstone, Ranger, Greenhouse, and Buster-Jangle carried the torch of scientific testing from isolated islands in the Pacific Ocean to the Mojave Desert in Nevada on a scale never before attempted. The United States tested its first hydrogen bomb, “Mike,” on Elugelab Island and obliterated it with a 10.4 megaton explosion. The Nevada Test Site opened for testing in 1951. All throughout these tests, the Marine Corps was always present,

whether as security detail aboard Navy ships, as onlookers, or otherwise. Yet even so, its participation in the tests was minimal. The Corps’ moment would not come until May 25, 1952.

With the end of the WW II, the Marine Corps found itself in the crosshairs of a skeptical Congress. Only two nuclear bombs were all it took to end the greatest war in history, and the strategic implications were vast. Many experts and politicians began to say the Marine Corps was obsolete because a single nuclear strike would destroy an amphibious landing party (this was before Operation Crossroads proved that neither an air nor underwater burst could effectively sink a fleet because the ocean itself cushions the ships in the explosion). In response, the Marine Corps began to legitimize its existence by reinventing the way it fought. The invention of the helicopter piqued the interest of the Corps’ leadership because of its speed and ability to drop troops almost anywhere. This idea combined with an overall vision of the execution of nuclear warfare over the next seven years. To practice and refine this style of warfare, an experimental unit known as Marine Corps Test Unit 1 was founded.

**The “sausage” device, below, of the Mike nuclear test was the first true hydrogen bomb ever tested. The device’s casing is on the left and its cryogenic equipment is on the right.**



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

For decades, the details of Marine Corps Test Unit 1 remained classified. The book “Fighting Elites: A History of U.S. Special Forces” makes no mention of the unit’s role in nuclear tests at all. Nevertheless, the operation it took part in became one of the most widely publicized series of tests ever conducted, with citizens from nearby Las Vegas looking on as a mushroom cloud from one of the many tests rose in the distant horizon. This mixture of secrecy and publicity resulted in a general knowledge of nuclear tests taking place, but a lamentable lack of knowledge of the Marine Corps’ involvement.

### Marine Corps Test Unit 1

Marine Corps Test Unit 1 participated in an exercise known as Desert Rock IV, which was a part of a series of tests known as Operation Tumbler-Snapper. The objectives were to find ways to compensate for a lack of adequate support from European allies in the Korean War with nuclear force and to usher in a new military policy with less emphasis on large standing armies and more on a readily available nuclear arsenal. Desert Rock IV played into these themes with its own objective of training troops to fight in close proximity to an atomic explosion and then studying the effect of the witnessed explosion on morale and courage. Depending on the outcome, the Department of Defense might decide to make more such exercises in order to train soldiers and Marines for nuclear combat in much the same way that Marines today train in gas chambers, but on a far larger scale. Marine Corps Test Unit 1 accomplished these objectives by digging fortifications 4 miles from ground zero and then marching toward ground zero while stopping occasionally to check if radiation levels were too high to proceed.

The Desert Rock IV exercise proved to be a massive undertaking for all involved. The exercise itself involved four shots: “Charlie,” “Dog,” “Fox” and “George,” of which Charlie, Dog, and George involved tactical maneuvers. Fox was observed but had no staged assault on ground zero. Of the roughly 8,700 participants in Operation Tumbler-Snapper, about 7,350 of them took part in Exercise Desert Rock IV, including scientific observers, air support and administrators, as well as more than 2,000 men in Marine Corps Test Unit 1. Ultimately, however, the exercise was run for and by the Army, which fielded more than 4,000 soldiers for the staged assault on ground zero and undertook the meticulous task of analyzing the emotional response of both soldiers and Marines after the assault was over.

Modern-day criticism of nuclear weaponry—particularly concerning the dangers



COURTESY OF NATIONAL NUCLEAR SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

**Marines prepare to move out after one of the explosions during Operation Tumbler-Snapper. The main objective of Tumbler-Snapper was to study the impact of atomic explosions on troops in close proximity.**

of radiation overdose—has overshadowed the appreciation of historic moments such as Desert Rock IV, yet public knowledge of nuclear technology and radiation proves ambiguous and often misunderstood. Today, declassified film footage of Desert Rock IV personnel climbing out of their trenches and marching toward the still-towering mushroom cloud attracts misguided, uninformed commentators that denounce the observed exercise as foolish, irresponsible and even evil. However, testing was planned and operated with the highest concern for public safety. Safety precautions were calculated and directed by professional scientists to sustain maximum well-being for all involved while still achieving the goals of the testing.

Declassified documents reveal many details of how dangers were perceived and

accounted for, though not all documents are declassified and some no longer exist. For troops and troop observers, exposure limits were designated as such: 5 pounds per square inch of overpressure, 3 roentgens of nuclear radiation per bomb test (6 roentgens in total for a six month period), and 1 calorie per square centimeter of thermal radiation. For Desert Rock IV, a cap of 3 REMs (roentgen equivalent man) per 13 week period was enforced. Indeed, these limits were not merely adequate, but in fact excessive: a *Forbes* article published Jan. 11, 2013, reports that any dosage of radiation under 10 REMs is negligible according to recent conclusions from the United Nations Scientific Committee.

In addition, safe distances also were calculated. Bombs Charlie, Dog, and George had yields of 31, 19, and 15 kilo-

tons respectively. Safe distances for each shot was calculated as 12,000, 9,000, and 9,000 yards respectively for troops in the open, and 3,800, 3,500, and 3,500 yards respectively for troops in trenches and foxholes, which would be 6 feet deep. In addition, troops in fortified trenches were instructed to “keep all parts of the body below a point at least two (2) feet below the ground level.” These, in addition to pages of further specifications, were the ground rules for such tests. The result was minimal exposure to radiation; of the 2,042 Marines whose external doses of radiation were recorded, 2,033 of them absorbed between 0 and .5 REMs for the entirety of Operation Tumbler-Snapper, that is, 99.6 percent of all Marine participants. An additional eight Marines absorbed between .5 and 1 REM, and one Marine absorbed between 1 and 3 REMs. Therefore, the safety precautions of Desert Rock IV were not only maintained, but also succeeded far beyond expectations.

### Psychological Impacts

The overall success of Exercise Desert Rock IV, however, is a different matter. The main objective was to evaluate the psychological effect of nuclear war on soldiers and Marines. Could men remain calm under such conditions? On this question rested all others, including the Marine Corps’ intent to develop tactics for combat

in a nuclear environment. As such, the men involved in the exercise were briefed extensively on the safety precautions as well as what to expect during the explosion. This, in addition to the certainties of a controlled environment for the test, resulted in troops who performed well. However, as the psychologists evaluated the troops afterwards, data became hard to obtain. “Reactions of Troops in Atomic Maneuvers: Exercise Desert Rock IV” compiles the research obtained by the psychologists, and it concludes that while “troops suffered no impairment of manual dexterity in their performance of a routine military task as a function of witnessing an A-bomb burst,” and “gave larger emotional reactions to questions concerning combat dangers than questions concerning atomic dangers ... it is not believed that atomic maneuvers of the type held in Exercise Desert Rock IV, with their emphasis on safety measures and control, yield the kind of data necessary for making predictions of how troops will actually perform in combat when A-bombs are used.” In other words, a test in a controlled environment cannot show how troops will react in the uncontrolled, dangerous conditions found in a combat environment.

Ultimately, while the tests were impressive and informative, they did not succeed in legitimizing future exercises for the purpose of training troops for nuclear

combat because not only were troops unafraid of the explosion in the first place, the tests were too expensive to do frequently. Similar exercises involving troop entrenchment near ground zero were conducted for the next five years, their purpose served to answer other questions. As for Marine Corps Test Unit 1, its mission shifted more toward helicopter and paratrooper tactics and less on nuclear warfare. For what it was worth, Marine Corps Test Unit 1 made the most of its experience in Nevada and heralded a new style of fighting incorporating helicopter tactics into warfighting that would prove key to Marine Corps operations in Vietnam and beyond. Having served its purpose, the unit disbanded on June 19, 1957.

The future is open to interpretation, but the continuing prevalence of war remains a certainty. It is anyone’s guess as to the role of nuclear weaponry in the future, but its past role is recorded, no matter how secretly. As the Marine Corps prepares itself to serve on the field of battle, may it remember the contributions made by one of its most interesting training units.

*Author’s bio: Cpl Daniel Chandler, USMC is an ammunition technician currently serving with H&S Battalion, MCIPAC, Okinawa, Japan.*



NATIONAL ARCHIVES

**During Operation Tumbler-Snapper of Desert Rock IV, the atomic cloud formed by the Dog detonation seemed close enough to touch.**



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## SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

### Run-ins With the General

I was stationed at Marine Corps Air Station Tustin, Calif., and assigned to HMH-462, a CH-37 helicopter squadron. I was a PFC on interior guard duty and our squadron was undergoing an Inspector General (IG) inspection as we were making preparations to deploy to Vietnam.

One end of the barracks was screened off and dedicated to guard personnel as we slept during the day and stood watch at night. I was lying on my bunk, reading while awaiting my ride to the flight line, my assigned post. I had my spit-shined boots on, and the heels were resting on the metal frame at the end of my bunk. I heard some noise coming down the passageway. I assumed from the chatter that it was the inspectors, but we had been told that the guards would not be included in the inspection.

All of a sudden, this officer with more silver on his collar than I had ever seen came barging into my cubicle. I snapped to attention but made the mistake of looking down on a three-star general—I was a few inches taller than he. He took his swagger stick and jammed it under my chin, lifting my gaze over his head. He then proceeded to chew me up one side and down the other. When I reported for duty later, I was told to report to my sergeant major. I was immediately taken off of guard duty and put back into my shop.

The next morning, I was assigned to battery changing detail. The batteries weighed

a ton, and I had to hand-carry them to the aircraft. I was removing a battery from its well in the aircraft and rolled it onto its side, right on top of a pair of spit-shined dress shoes. I was mortified! I looked up into the eyes of the same Lieutenant General Victor H. “Brute” Krulak I had a run-in with the day before. He just looked at me. His aid asked my name. The next day, I was transferred to HMM-164.

About four months later, as we were steaming from Okinawa to Vietnam, I snuck into Primary Flight Control aboard USS *Valley Forge* (CV-45). It was the only place on the ship that

**I snapped to attention but made the mistake of looking down on a three-star general—I was a few inches taller than he. He took his swagger stick and jammed it under my chin, lifting my gaze over his head.**

had a refrigerated water fountain. This particular fountain was tricky. When you pushed the button for water, a huge stream would shoot out about two feet and then settle back to a drinkable trickle. I hit the button and the water shot out and all over the back of a starched olive green utility blouse. The shocked owner spun around and looked up into my eyes. Guess who it was? He did not say a word, and I ran like hell.

Six months later, we were having an awards ceremony.

A few of us were receiving medals, and LtGen Krulak was pinning them on. I was mortified. When he got to me, he looked in my eyes and asked, “Don’t I know you, Marine?” I respectfully replied, “No, sir.” He moved on to the next Marine.

Thirty-eight years later, it was October 1995 and I was stationed with HMM-165 in Hawaii. I happened to be alone in the ready room one Sunday afternoon when a three-star general walked in. I snapped to attention. He introduced himself as LtGen Charles C. Krulak, “Brute’s” son. He was extremely amicable, and we had a very nice long chat. During the course of our conversation, I relayed my story of my misadventures with his father.

This was only about three weeks before the Marine Corps Ball. LtGen Krulak told me that his father was to be the guest of honor and that I should introduce myself to him and relive the story with him. I did just that. I am pleased to report that the general got a real kick out of the story. But he only remembered me ruining his best dress shoes.

CWO-5 John Moist  
USMC (Ret)  
Gig Harbor, Wash.

### Goldberg’s Big Chance

I arrived at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif., on Aug. 30, 1964. Along with about 60 other new “boots,” we were assigned to Platoon 178, Company A, First Battalion. Keep in mind that the Gulf of Tonkin incident occurred only a couple of weeks earlier.

One of the recruits was named Goldberg. He was a nice enough guy and nobody in the platoon had any issues with him. He

stood out no more and no less than any other recruit with one exception. Many of us had joined the Marine Corps with some sort of military occupational specialty (MOS) guarantee. For example, I knew I was going to an aviation-related MOS. The odd thing about Goldberg that made him stand out was that Goldberg’s only motivation for joining the Corps was to be in the band.

Goldberg let everyone know that he wanted to be in the band. He told every recruit in the platoon and each of our drill instructors and our platoon commander. I’m sure he told anyone who would listen. I know because I heard him say many times: “Sir, Pvt Goldberg wants to be in the band.” It was kind of funny, in a way.

Our DIs told us that we would for certain be going to Vietnam. That didn’t deter Goldberg. He still wanted to be in the USMC band.

November began and we were getting ready for the battalion commander’s inspection. Our DIs told us that on the day of the inspection, the battalion commander would not stop at each recruit but those he did stop at he would ask us our names, where we were from and ask what we wanted to do in the Marine Corps.

The DIs emphasized that the only acceptable answer was: “Sir, the private wants to be a rifleman or a machine gunner,” regardless of what MOS we were guaranteed.

The much-awaited day came. We were in our “Alphas” and standing tall, ready for inspection. We were almost Marines.

We opened ranks, and the battalion commander began his ritual. He went through

the first squad. He went to the second squad where Pvt Goldberg was standing at the position of attention. The lieutenant colonel stopped in front of Goldberg. The first couple of questions went fine, and then the inspecting officer asked Goldberg: "So, Private, what do you want to do in the Marine Corps?" It was Goldberg's big chance. "Sir, Pvt Goldberg wants to be in the band, sir."

Everyone who heard the exchange could hardly keep from laughing. Everyone said you could almost see the blood drain from our drill instructor's face.

"Good for you, private," or something like that was all the battalion commander said, and he moved on.

I sure hope Goldberg made the band.

SSgt Steve Dumovich  
USMC, 1964-70  
Collinsville, Texas

### Who Needs the Doc?

In most of the softball games we had when we were in reserve in Korea, I was the left fielder for the Navy against the Marines, two or three dry rice paddies above home plate. One day, I was late for the game. As the rest of the team was warming up, the third baseman threw an errant throw to first, hitting the pitcher on the head and knocking him out.

As the coach knelt to examine the pitcher, someone said, "Too bad the doc ain't here yet!"

The coach looked up and said, "Why? He can't pitch!"

Priorities—that's what life is all about!

J. Birney Dibble, M.D.  
Eau Claire, Wis.

### Fire on the Range

In 1972, I was serving as a senior drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif. While doing our rifle training on a Sunday afternoon at Edson Range, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, our series gunny decided that we would have an ambush

from two platoons as the other two marched between two berm lines. He had appropriated flares and blanks. The instructions were to wait until the two platoons were below us, shoot a flare, and on his command, "Fire!" to charge down the hill at the two platoons. As the platoons entered the area, he shot the flare, which caught the brush on fire.

"Fire, fire, fire!" the privates yelled, firing the blanks and charging down the hill.

The ambush turned into

**The instructions were to wait until the two platoons were below us, shoot a flare, and on his command, "Fire!" to charge down the hill at the two platoons.**

a cluster mess as they were trying to put out the real fire. The fire department showed up, and the next morning the gunny and the series commander were standing tall in front of the commanding officer of the Edson Range.

MSgt Robert B. Robinson,  
USMC  
San Marcos, Calif.

### Nothing Like a Marine Salute

I was assigned with about 150 other Marines to guard atomic bombs on Kwajalein Island after World War II. The bombs were to be dropped on Bikini Atoll. The purpose was to test the effects of atomic power on a collection of damaged warships from Japan and the U.S.

We had a restricted area, which contained the bombs, where you were required to have a pass to enter. Marines protected the restricted area 24 hours a day. On one

occasion it was my duty to guard the main gate of the restricted area. I was busy talking about a change in general orders with a fellow Marine when a jeep pulled up with a Navy officer who wanted to enter. I checked his badge and gave him a sloppy salute. The jeep pulled ahead several feet, stopped and then backed up to where I was standing.

The officer said, "Marine, I want a proper Marine salute!" I straightened up and said in a loud voice, "Officer on the deck!" and threw him the best snappy salute I could muster. He saluted back and pulled away with a happy smile. I guess Marine salutes are a collector's item.

Sgt Don Heath, USMC (Ret)  
Rancho Palos Verdes, Calif.

### Marines are Marines Forever

My husband loved the Marine Corps and had accumulated a lot of USMC memorabilia. After he died, I gathered a number of these items to include sport shirts, caps, ties, clips and so on. I sent the collection of items to a family friend, Sergeant Major George Meyer, who runs a monthly breakfast at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Later, he called me to report on what had happened. Everybody had gotten something, he said. As one of the older gentlemen was leaving, he showed George the tie. "I'll give this to my old lady to keep."

"Why?" George asked, puzzled.

"So I can wear it when I'm laid out in my coffin."

My husband would have loved that one. Marines are indeed Marines forever.

June E. Heim  
Silver Spring, Md.

### O, Ye of Little Faith

It was a dark and stormy night. Yes, it really was!

Jan. 9-16, 1968, found my unit, 2d Shore Party, making its last amphibious landing

in the Mediterranean while attached to Battalion Landing Team 1/2. We had landed at Porto Scudo, Sardinia. The cruise began under much more favorable conditions in August 1967—hot, dry, sunny and beautiful. Now it was winter and the conditions were quite the opposite: cold, wet, very windy and miserable. One night, a fierce rainstorm blew through. A large number of us were sleeping in a general purpose (GP) tent, and even though we had secured it as best we could, it became apparent the tent might not be able to withstand the high winds. It was decided to bring several heavy pieces of construction equipment, bulldozers, etc., to firmly secure the tent to the machinery.

As soon as the last ropes were attached to the heavy equipment, a rather irreverent Marine stood up and grabbed a support pole and proudly announced in a voice loud enough for everyone—20 or so of us—to hear: "Even God could not knock this tent down!"

Before the last syllable left his mouth, the tent collapsed completely. We spent the night sleeping under it just as it fell.

Sgt Paul C. Hughes  
Spring, Texas

*Editor's note: 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: Sara W. Bock, Leatherneck Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or e-mail them to [s.bock@mca-marines.org](mailto:s.bock@mca-marines.org). We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA&F membership for the "Sea Story of the Month." Spread the word!*



**The crew of Rockin' Reaper: (from the left) LCpl Sean Edler, loader; LCpl Rick Freier, driver; Cpl James Brackett, gunner; and SSgt Jeff Dacus, tank commander. Rockin' Reaper was one of several tanks in Co B, 4th Tank Battalion during Operation Desert Storm.**



# The Reveille Engagement

By MSgt Jeff Dacus, USMCR (Ret)  
Photos courtesy of the author

**I**n the dark, early-morning hours of Feb. 25, 1991, a battalion of tanks and mechanized vehicles from the Iraqi 3rd Mechanized Division moved south along a road that just happened to be the dividing line between the Second Marine Division and First Marine Division. Their destination was the logistical trains of First Battalion, 8th Marines, on the right of the 2dMarDiv front. Through intelligence failure or just dumb luck, the Iraqi column was undetected by scouts or air reconnaissance.

The Iraqi soldiers moved cautiously along, hidden by the darkness, oil-haze and dust, unaware that a company of Marine M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tanks, equally hidden by the dust and semidarkness, had spotted them. Cirled up in a company coil about 1,200 meters to the west of the Iraqi vehicles, reveille on that morning for the Marines of "Bravo" Company, 4th Tanks was provided by the squeaky tracks of Soviet-built tanks.

Only a few weeks before, the Marines of Captain Ralph "Chip" Parkison's Marines were civilians serving one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer as reservists meeting in Yakima, Wash. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait led President George H.W. Bush to call up reservists to flesh out the active-duty elements who were confronting the dictator's

threat to Saudi Arabia and continued occupation of Kuwait; it was the first time since the Korean War that large numbers of reservists had been called to the colors.

Mustered on the active rolls Dec. 13, 1990, the Marines of Co B left Yakima two days later for new equipment training at Twentynine Palms, Calif. Formerly equipped with the M60A1 tank, the Marines rushed through a scaled-down course to master the new M1A1 Abrams tank. By Jan. 18, 1991, they were in Saudi Arabia and moving to positions along the Saudi-Kuwaiti border. On Feb. 24, the tankers were part of First Battalion, 8th Marines crossing into Kuwait in the first wave of the attacks to oust Hussein's troops.

Moving through the minefields that morning cost the company Sergeant Robert Trainor's tank, "Four Horsemen." Luckily, no crewmen were lost in the disabling explosion. Fighting through the minefields and Iraqi defenses, "Bravo" Co finished the afternoon of the first day by destroying enemy positions along with the fleeing enemy vehicles as well as corralling droves of eager prisoners in the "Battle of the Candy Canes," so-called because of red and white painted transmission towers that ran along the path of the Iraqis trying to escape. Pulling back to escape an enemy barrage, the 13 tanks of Bravo Co went into a defensive coil for the night.

On the morning of Feb. 25, Captain Alan Hart's Second Platoon

was situated in the northeasterly position in the coil, Captain Bryan Cline's 3d Plt was to the south, and WO Larry Fritts' 1st Plt was in the northwesterly position. Corporal Stan Harris of 2d Plt was on watch with Cpl Brad Briscoe. Briscoe said he had shapes in his thermal sights. They also heard an unusual clanking noise. They alerted Capt Hart, who was talking to Capt Parkison, and asked him about the sounds. At first, Hart was unimpressed. He thought the distant, clattering squeal must be from Marine amtracs but that didn't soothe Briscoe's anxiety.

Before resuming his watch, Briscoe went to the platoon's gunner, LCpl Lee Fowble, and asked him to scan the same area. Fowble did and picked up the images. As he and Briscoe decided they were enemy, Hart and Parkison heard the distinct sounds of diesel engines.

Hart, a farmer from Oregon, recognized the sounds of tractors moving. Unlike American tanks, Soviet-built vehicles had no rubber bushings on their track pins and made loud, squealing, clanking noises. Parkison looked at Hart and calmly said, "Those aren't our amtracs." Hart, the farmer and veteran tanker who knew the sounds of tracked vehicles better than most in the company, concurred.

Hart yelled out: "Tanks, tanks, tanks, direct front!"

Marines all around the coil were instantly awake, scrambling for their positions. Turrets swung around and engines screamed as the tanks moved to place their front armor toward the enemy. In the middle of all this activity, Hart jumped aboard his tank and looked into his sight extension. He could see the columns of vehicles moving from north to south, gun tubes pointing south. With a clear target, Hart ordered Fowble to fire. As the round flew downrange, Sergeant John Gibbert over in 3d Plt engaged the enemy as his platoon moved on line to the right of 2d Plt. Briscoe, on Cpl Vern Forenpohar's "Torture Chamber," also fired within a few seconds. First Plt's tanks quickly moved into position on the left of 2d and immediately joined in the festivities.

The first light of the day showed the Iraqi tanks appearing from the dusty, early-morning mist and the darkness of the oil clouds. The 120 mm tank-killing sabot rounds, traveling at 4,000 feet per second, met them as they emerged. Traveling in three columns, the first tank in the right hand column, closest to Bravo Co, exploded into a massive, red-yellow ball of flame, its turret spinning off. The lead tank in the center column and the lead tank in the far column exploded in kind. An Iraqi survivor, the commander of the second tank in the center column,



**The Marines destroyed 35 Iraqi tanks including the T-72 shown here with its turret detached.**

later said: "I saw the tank to my right blow up, then the ones in front and to the left blew up and I knew I was next. I jumped off my tank just as it blew up." His crew was incinerated.

Hart and Gibbert had scored quickly, the sharp crack of their 120 mm guns signaling the deaths of enemy vehicles. Forenpohar's first shot went flying off into the sky. He fired again, the flaming trajectory arcing into the dark sky. A quick check proved he had HEAT (High Explosive Anti Tank), indexed in the computer but was firing sabot, a kinetic energy round used against armor. That was rectified and Torture Chamber scored a quick kill.

In 3d Plt, Lance Corporal Sean Edler clambered around the top of the moving turret to wipe condensation from the gun sights of "Rockin' Reaper," whose gunner fired as Elder crawled back into the turret to reload the main gun.

The line of Marine tanks volleyed again and again. A T-72

**"Tanks, tanks, tanks,  
direct front!"  
Marines all around the  
coil were instantly awake,  
scrambling for their  
positions.**



**Iraqi forces also used Chinese-made personnel carriers during the Reveille Engagement; they met the same fate as the Iraqi tanks.**



**One of the two tanks destroyed by Rockin' Reaper's gunner, Cpl James Brackett.**

turret flew into the air, 20 or 30 feet, and crashed back to the ground. A T-55 in the middle of the Iraqi battalion took a hit and began smoking. The smoke soon stopped and the archaic Russian-built tank appeared to be undamaged, so another Marine tank fired and hit it. More smoke, but no catastrophic hit. While T-72s exploded easily, this T-55 took at least five hits. One uranium penetrator hit the turret, went through the interior and exited out the other side.

The long rod penetrators of the Abrams' sabot rounds sliced through Iraqi armor with ease. The self-sharpening darts pierced the armor and splashed pieces of white-hot "spall" into the interior of the Iraqi tanks. Anything flammable burned immediately, ammunition cooked off, fuel and lubricants ignited. Humans disappeared in fiery deaths with nothing left to qualify as remains.

Amid the loud crashes of tank guns and explosions of Iraqi tanks, the vehicles of Bravo Co gradually moved on line. It was



**The ferocity of the "Reveille Engagement" was evident by the destruction of many of the Iraqi T-72 tanks and the loss or surrender of their tank crews.**

a frustrating time for many of them. In 2d Plt, Sergeant Tim McDonald, " ... began acquiring targets at the far left of the enemy formation, but as soon as I began to engage, suddenly the target would blow up and I had to find something else. That happened over and over ... I killed four T-72s."

Staff Sergeant Knapp experienced a system malfunction. Knapp, the most experienced tankerman in the company, shut off all power. When he switched turret power back on, his system was restored. Back in action, his gun nailed two more Iraqi tanks.

WO Fritts' tank quickly went into action, and his gunner, Cpl John "Stuka" Stahnke, scored a kill. Unfortunately, the guards to protect personnel from the recoil of the main gun were not in place, and the giant breech of the gun struck Fritts a glancing blow. Even the slight blow was painful, and his knee was cracked but he continued in action and scored several more kills.

Live targets abruptly disappeared after the first 90 seconds or so, and tankers searched through the smoke and haze for another shot. In 3d Plt, Cpl James Brackett spotted an enemy tank to the rear of the burning columns. The depleted uranium dart sliced through the tank with a blaze of sparks but an observer called miss. Brackett sighted in again and fired. This time there was a gigantic explosion. Brackett went back to scanning. Later observation of the battlefield would reveal that Brackett had destroyed two tanks even though observers thought he had merely re-engaged the same one.

Gibbert probably had the last shots of the battle. Two dug-in T-55s had been on the field all day but were unengaged because they appeared to be abandoned. As the battlefield quieted, "When's Chow" took on those two. Gibbert calmly gave the appropriate fire commands to Cpl Dave Killian, his gunner. Killian's shots were excellent, hitting the old tanks dead center just a few inches above their protective berm. Unlike the newer



**Although Bravo Co was victorious in destroying many vehicles similar to this one, it was a frustrating time for many of them to acquire targets and move down the line of oncoming tanks.**



**Numerous Iraqi soldiers were captured after the battle, many of whom were infantrymen unlucky enough to face Rockin Reaper and other tanks from Co B, 4th Tank Battalion.**

T-72s, the T-55s' turrets did not fly off into the air. Both merely burned out.

As the last shots were fired, the Marines noticed Iraqi soldiers approaching the tanks with their hands in the air. Some were injured. One had his arm torn off at the shoulder. The effect on the Marines was sobering. "Right after the engagement, the enemy soldiers started walking off the battlefield," McDonald related later. "We were pumped up on adrenaline from the tank engagement and now we've got enemy dismounts walking toward us. We trained machine guns on them, but it quickly became obvious that they'd taken a hell of a beating. Some were missing arms, legs—a lot of them were in bad shape. They surrendered, and we had to treat their wounded; [there were] no other units were in the area who could do so."

Even as the Iraqis straggled in, Bravo Co's log train arrived behind the line of tanks. A service station resupply was set up and a tank from each platoon backed off the line to visit the ammo truck or refueler. First Sergeant Robert Martin, a former San Diego policeman, and SSgt Tom Dittmar, a Seattle policeman, moved amongst the incoming prisoners. They organized a thorough system in order to search the prisoners and arrange for medical care. Corpsmen rushed out to tend to the enemy wounded of which there were 12. The Iraqis were torn up, some missing limbs or cut up by shrapnel. Most were infantrymen who had unluckily been on the battlefield. There were few survivors from the destroyed Iraqi tanks. The viciousness of tank combat was evident as most of the crews of destroyed tanks were vaporized.

A total of 76 prisoners were counted. One of them erroneously told the Marines that their commander was a member of the vaunted Republican Guards. He was still out on the battlefield in a

bunker. Despite later searches, the colonel was never found but the report of Republican Guards led the Marines to believe they had encountered a Republican Guards outfit. The presence of T-72s, the Iraqis' best tank, reinforced this impression. It was believed the attackers were the Republican Guards' 3rd Mechanized, the so-called "Tawalkana," an outfit actually destroyed by the U.S. Army far to the west. Thirty-five enemy tanks and several Chinese personnel carriers were destroyed. Bravo Co Marines called it the Reveille Engagement because it had been a rude awakening that morning.

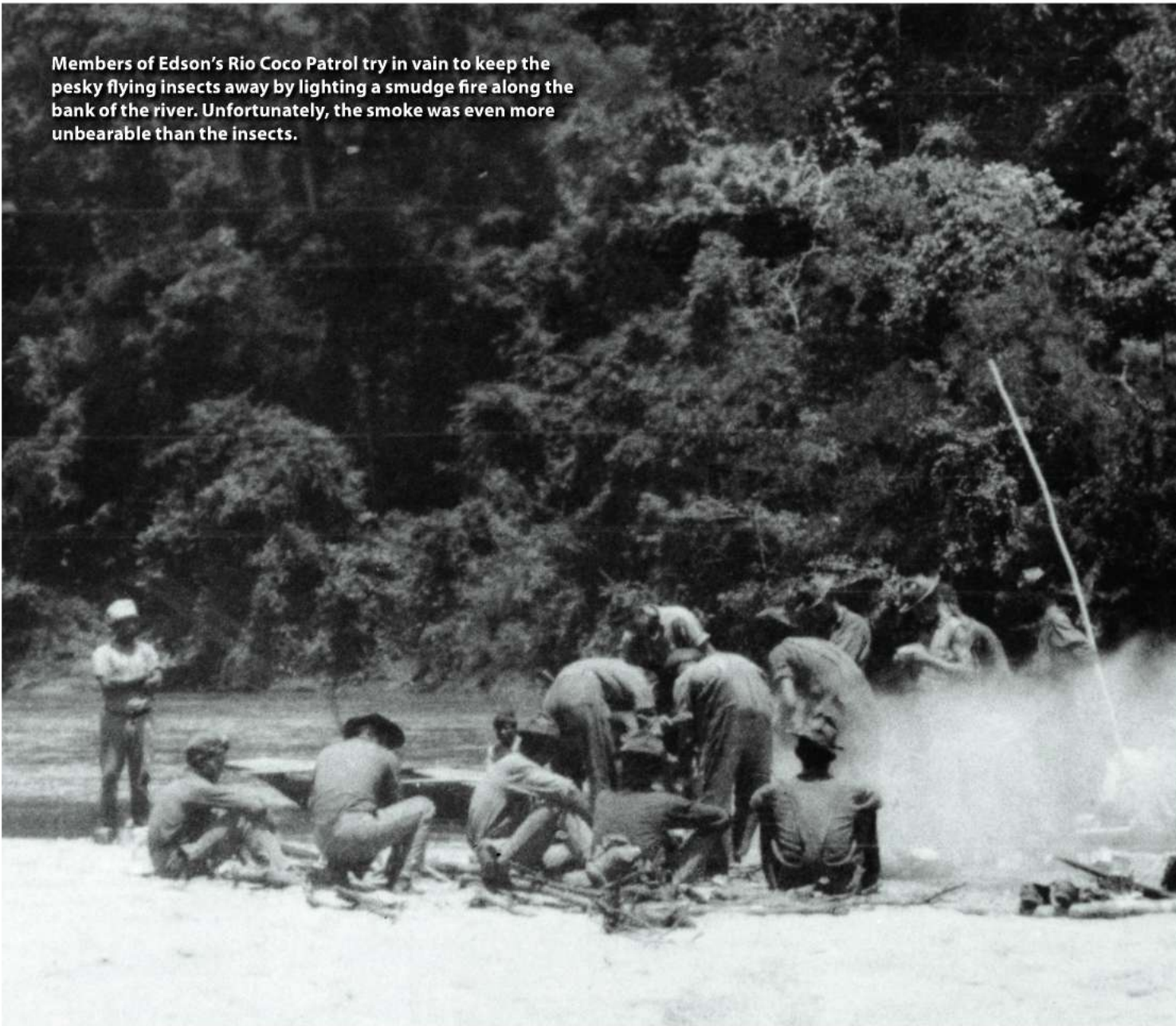
The company had no time to think about the action; they began moving late that morning toward Kuwait City. In the next two days they would encounter more Iraqis as they destroyed random enemy troops and vehicles and fought engagements at the "L" and at the "Dairy" before ending the ground war alongside the Sixth Ring Motorway on the outskirts of Kuwait City.

Two weeks after the war ended, Bravo Co returned to Saudi Arabia and eventually to Washington in May to resume their lives as college students, plumbers, engineers and other civilian occupations. Paraded through Yakima when they arrived, the Marines waved to the hometown crowds with the satisfaction that they had accomplished their mission as well as participated in the large tank versus tank engagement in Marine Corps history, the Reveille Engagement.

*Author's bio: MSgt Jeff Dacus, USMCR (Ret), lives in Vancouver, Wash., where he teaches 8th-grade history. His 23 years as a Marine include a combat deployment during Operation Desert Storm as a tank platoon sergeant.*



Members of Edson's Rio Coco Patrol try in vain to keep the pesky flying insects away by lighting a smudge fire along the bank of the river. Unfortunately, the smoke was even more unbearable than the insects.



## Nicaragua 1928

# The Rio Coco Patrol

By Maj Allan C. Bevilacqua, USMC (Ret)

*"Due to all the rains, the river is so high that our boats have to go along close to the bank, wending their way between and under trees. It is a common thing to have to cut one's way through the limbs. The result is that all day one is busy brushing off ants—worms—and bugs of all disciplines, most of whom bite."*

—Capt Merritt A. Edson, USMC, Nicaragua, August 1928

**A**s early as the mid-nineteenth century, the Central American country of Nicaragua had been constantly torn between two political factions, Conservatives and Liberals, each striving for national supremacy. Conservatives

could be described as devout Roman Catholics who believed in traditional Hispanic forms of family and society, while Liberals practiced an almost anti-clerical secularism and an increasingly aggressive form of Euro-socialism. Their conflicts at the ballot box frequently erupted into armed confrontation.

The year 1928 was an election year in Nicaragua, and Nicaraguan elections were not passive affairs. The election of 1928 promised to be even more explosive than most, which were explosive enough in their own right. Into the volatile mix of Conservatives and Liberals was thrown the human incendiary device of Augusto Nicolas Calderon Sandino. A complex blend of ardent Nicaraguan patriot and fire-breathing Marxist revolutionary dedicated to the armed overthrow of the





USMC

**Below: Cpl G.P. Brundage, second from the right, oversees the casting of votes in Nicaragua in 1928. It was common for military to be involved in Nicaraguan elections at that time because of the potential for violence.**



USMC



USMC

**Left: Merritt Edson earned the nickname “Red Mike” because of the red beard he wore during his time in Nicaragua. Edson would later receive the Navy Cross for his leadership of the Rio Coco Patrol.**

government, Augusto Sandino had openly declared his intention to disrupt the elections and seize power by force.

As a countermove, Nicaragua’s interim president, Adolfo Diaz, requested that the elections be monitored by United States Marines. U.S. President Calvin Coolidge was less than enthusiastic at the prospects of such an involvement, but under the terms of an agreement negotiated between Conservatives and Liberals by Special Envoy Henry L. Stimson, the President consented. The stage was set for a collision between Marines and Sandino’s followers, “Sandinistas.” That collision would take place in eastern Nicaragua, for centuries the home of the Miskito Indians.

### The Miskito

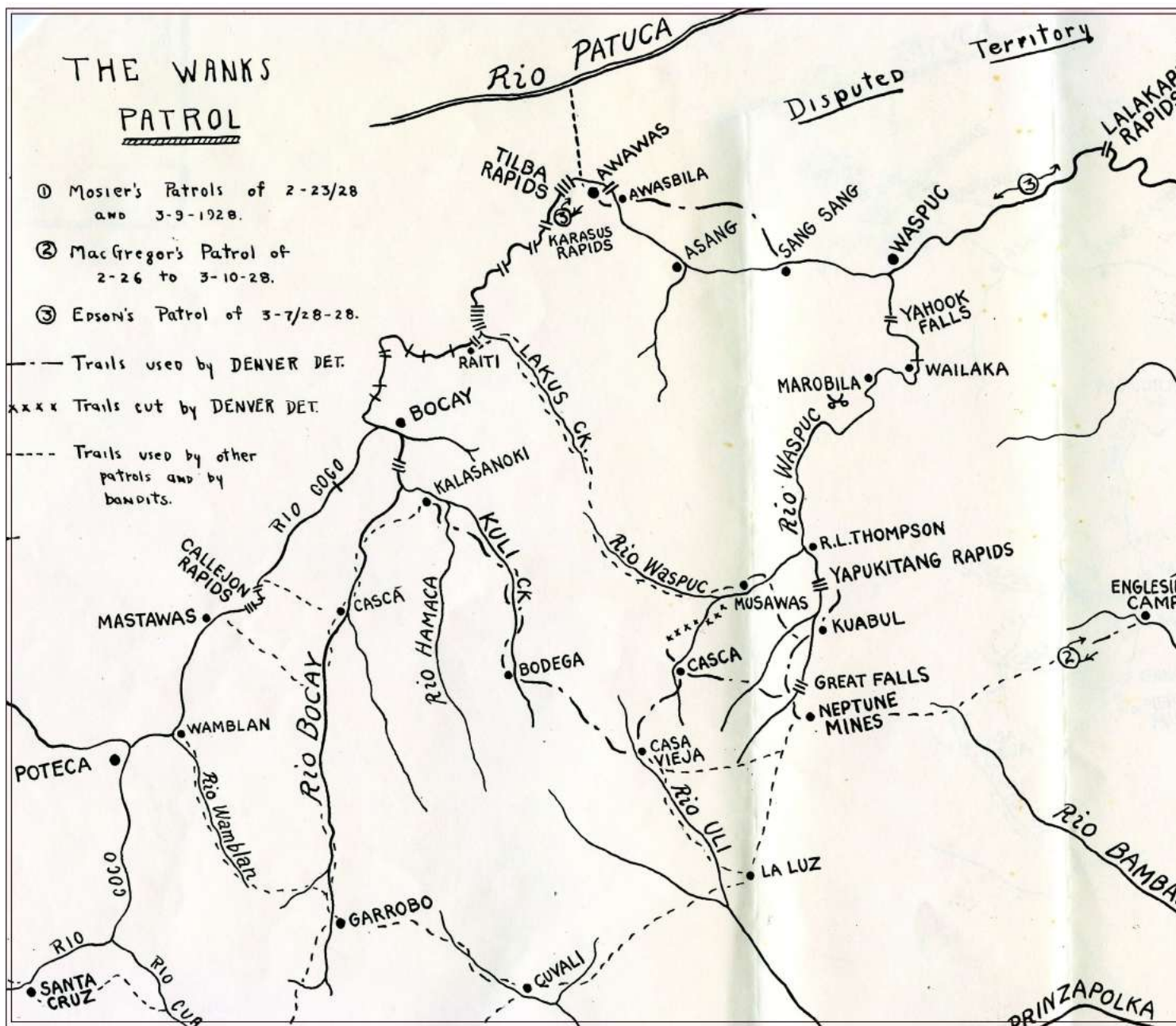
The Miskito prided themselves in never having been subjugated by early Spanish adventurers. Neither had they been assimilated into Nicaraguan culture, being more than determined to remain in their dense jungle domain, a nation within a nation, viewing Nicaraguans as “Spaniards.” They were the absolute masters of a vast region of rain forest, second in its immensity only to the Amazon, with almost no roads and few trails. In their extremely remote area known as “The Frontier,” the Miskito, expert boatmen

without peer, roamed freely along waterways that would have defeated anyone else.

Even the Rio Coco, a raging torrent all year, but especially during the rainy season, gave them no fears. From its source in the province of Nueva Segovia, Augusto Sandino’s stronghold in Nicaragua’s Northern Highlands, the Rio Coco flowed almost 500 miles, its lower reaches forming part of the international boundary between Nicaragua and Honduras, before reaching the sea north of Puerto Cabezas.

It wasn’t the Rio Coco’s length that made it such a formidable barrier. It was the river’s very nature that made it so daunting. There was nothing gentle and meandering about the Rio Coco. Every foot along the way the constantly decreasing elevation of the region forced the Rio Coco along at an ever faster rate of flow. Going upstream against that current was extremely difficult at best. During the summer rainy season, when the eastern region of Nicaragua endured as much as 300 inches of rain, the Rio Coco was capable of rising 1 foot each hour. Taking the Rio Coco head-on was a job for only the most skilled watermen.

Taking the Rio Coco head-on at the height of the rainy season, with the river at flood stage, was exactly what Captain Merritt A. Edson, USMC, intended to do. As commander of the Marine Detachment, USS *Denver* (CL-16), Edson had brought his entire detachment ashore at Puerto Cabezas in January 1928. As directed by Major Harold Utley, USMC, the officer in command of Nicaragua’s Eastern District, Edson and *Denver*’s Marines began conducting local security patrols in response to intelligence reports indicating possible infiltration by advance elements of Sandino’s



forces. In June, Edson's small command was increased with the addition of the Marine Detachment, USS *Rochester* (CA-2).

Why wait for Sandino to bring major elements from the north, Edson reasoned. Why allow Sandino to exercise the initiative? Why not hit Sandino from the blind side, what he thought was his secure eastern flank, before he was able to make good his intention to carry the conflict to the Eastern District? How? By driving some 370 miles directly up the Rio Coco to the town of Poteca, Sandino's best potential staging base, checkmating Sandino's move before he could make it.

### Edson's Proposal

Confident that he could beat Sandino to the punch, even faced with the racing waters of the Rio Coco, Edson approached Maj Utley with the proposal. During the months they had been associated, Maj Utley had become so impressed by Merritt Edson's aggressiveness, determination and intelligence that he approached Brigadier General Logan Feland, USMC, who was in overall command of Marine operations in Nicaragua, with the idea. The next day BGen Feland, Maj Utley and Capt Edson sat down to discuss it.

"Major Utley tells me that you would like to go to Poteca. Can you get there from this coast?" BGen Feland began. No stranger to combat, Kentucky-born Logan Feland brought with him an impressive record as commander of the 5th Marines in France in World War I.

"Yes, sir; it can be done," Edson replied.

A fighting man himself, BGen Feland needed nothing more in the way of an answer.

"Well, I'm going to give you the chance to do it." BGen Feland went on to relate that aerial reconnaissance and human sources all confirmed evidence of Sandino's forces in and around Poteca. Marines from the Northern District could not reach Poteca from the west soon enough to make a difference. If Sandino's attempt to extend his territory into the Eastern District was to be stopped before it could start, it would be Edson who would have to do the stopping. In doing that stopping, Edson would need help and he knew it.

Edson's objective of Poteca could not be reached overland in time to do any good, not faced with the near impenetrable jungle that covered everything from the coast to the Highlands. For Edson's Marines to hack and chop their way through the green



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS GAZETTE

wall of jungle that blanketed the entire area between Puerto Cabezas and Poteca would have consumed months. Only the Rio Coco existed as a realistic approach route to Poteca. In all of Nicaragua, only one group of people were capable of tackling the Rio Coco—the Miskito Indians.

From the very beginning, Edson had set about creating cordial relations with the Miskito, treating them with dignity and courtesy, always as equals, never as servants or menials. He knew that if he were to succeed in moving into the interior by way of the Rio Coco, it could be done only by gaining the trust of the Miskito. If the Miskito were to willingly join Edson's force as boatmen, men accepted as equals, that trust would have to be earned through fair and honorable actions.

In his instructions to his Marines, Edson made it clear that fair and honorable actions must be sincere, not matters of convenience. "The Miskito are a proud people with a long history. Our success depends upon their assistance. They are far better at navigating this river than any of us. Only by dealing with them man-to-man, honestly, can we have any hope of succeeding. I expect each of you to conduct yourselves in such a fashion. I believe that if we offer the Miskito our hand in true friendship, they will accept it."

In a torrential downpour, Edson and 61 handpicked Marines started up the Rio Coco on July 26, 1928. Writing of it later to the girl he would one day marry, Private Edward Holston recorded: "It rains hard enough to knock you down. I've never seen anything like it. I haven't been here very long, but if this is what life in Nicaragua is like, I'll take Chillicothe [Ohio] any day."

### Fighting the Elements

Rain, constant and everlasting rain, day after day, was to be the trademark of the Rio Coco Patrol. The rain that fell for the entire period that Edson and his men made their way upriver was not of the gentle variety. Rather, it was a thunderous downpour that easily defeated any attempts to stay dry. For the Marines of the patrol, being soaking wet was an inescapable fact of daily life. All too soon that water-soaked existence would begin to exert an adverse effect on clothing, footwear and personal health as well.

Ferried along in "pitpans" (dugout canoes) by volunteer Miskito boatmen and guides, fighting the furious force of the river, Edson's patrol advanced little more than 12 miles upriver that day. Wise to the ways of the river, the Miskito avoided any attempt to battle the river in midstream.

Out in the middle of that raging torrent, the force of the current was too overpoweringly strong to be overcome by simple muscle power. Full-grown trees of 60 to 100 feet in height, uprooted by the raging water of the Rio Coco, could be hurled downstream like toothpicks, carrying everything before them, obliterating anything in their path.

The experience of generations on the water had taught the Miskito that the prudent way to venture upstream against the Rio Coco in flood was to hug the river bank where the current was considerably less strong. That did not mean that the job was easier. With the river out of its banks, the trees that grew to the water's edge were now half in the water. The multitude



USMC

**Marines of the Rio Coco Patrol stand next to the pitpans they used to navigate the river. Pitpans are long, flat-bottomed canoes that were used to transport supplies and, in this case, Marines.**

of low-hanging limbs that normally were just overhead had become obstacles to be cleared.

While the Miskito provided the motive power with poles and paddles, Edson's Marines provided the muscle power using axes and handsaws, cutting a path through the overhanging greenery. In addition to a shower of leaves, this activity also produced a shower of biting, stinging insects, and occasionally a snake that had sought to escape the rising waters of the Rio Coco.

The relief system Edson had worked out to clear a path through the river improved their progress. While not easy, the undertaking was at least less daunting. As planned before departure, the lead pitpan tended to tree clearance for 30 minutes, then fell back to the tail of the flotilla, while the next pitpan in line assumed the lead role. Strenuous? Yes, extremely strenuous, but progress was being made. After a day of such exertions, all hands were more than ready for a night's rest, which didn't necessarily mean they would get it.

Each night camp was made ashore on such relatively dry land that could be found. Night also brought hordes of mosquitoes. The members of the patrol had been equipped with material that would make a crude shelter, as well as netting to keep the blood-thirsty mosquitoes at bay. Sometimes these field expedients were successful; most times they were not. Even if the netting succeeded in blocking out the mosquitoes, it failed to halt the nightly onslaught of sand fleas. Small enough to pass easily

the north bank. There was a scarcely used trail that led to the location. If Edson wished, the Indians would lead his men there.

Edson dispatched an eight-man combat patrol led by Corporal Elwyn Richards to investigate the area. Guided by the Indians, Cpl Richards' small patrol caught the intruders completely by surprise. There was no resistance. Not a shot was fired. As soon as the intruders (undoubtedly Sandinistas) saw the Marines, they fled. The relatively small size of the Sandinista element, and their precipitate flight, led Edson to conclude that they were scouts on a reconnaissance mission who expected no resistance. Sandino now would be alerted to the presence of Edson's force and its probable mission.

Could Sandino do anything about it? Not if Edson continued to have the trust and cooperation of the Miskito. As Edson moved deliberately but constantly upstream, the Indians of the widely scattered villages along the route proved to be ever more helpful, offering their services as advance scouts. On two more occasions, small groups of three or four "bandits" turned and fled upon encountering Edson's rather unusual screening force. Sandino's attempts to gain information of Edson's force were turned back by the Indians who had accepted Edson as trustworthy. No shots were exchanged in these encounters.

The weather continued to be miserable and the river a monster, but thus far, Sandino's every move had been pre-empted before Sandino could make it. The non-resistance of Sandino's elements encountered and their small size both indicated that Sandino had in fact been caught flat footed, with little manpower in an area he had considered safe from attack. The contest increasingly became a matter of which side could reach Poteca first, Edson or Sandino.

More than a week into the upstream fight with the Rio Coco, only the Marines of Cpl Richards' small patrol had seen a Sandinista. The weather was something else entirely; all hands saw that all day every day. The combination of thunderous rainfall, soaring temperatures and suffocating humidity was not long in exacting a toll on both men and equipment. Even the most elementary forms of personal hygiene became monumental undertakings. Many completely abandoned any attempt at shaving. Edson himself soon sported a face full of bright red bristles that earned him a nickname that would last for the rest of his life: Red Mike.

As the month of July drew to a close, more than half of the members of the patrol were gulping quinine tablets twice daily to hold the effects of malaria at bay. Skin ulcers and fungus infections that turned armpits, groins and feet raw and painful were becoming increasingly prominent. The upstream fight against the Rio Coco was becoming less of a fight with Sandinistas and more a battle with the elements.

As fully as nature's ravages affected the men, no less so did nature debilitate their equipment. Each morning revealed a thick coating of green mold on web equipment, footwear and leather. Clothing literally was disintegrating on men's backs under the combined assaults of rain, heat and humidity. Very few members of the patrol were any longer wearing socks; they had long since turned to grey pulp. On Aug. 3, Edson dispatched a trusted Indian guide to Puerto Cabezas with a message for Maj Utley requesting a complete resupply of clothing, shoes and "240 pairs of socks, woolen." It was requested that as soon as the weather allowed, these materials be air dropped.



USMC

**Marines of the Rio Coco Patrol camped in makeshift huts, or "lean-tos."**

through the mosquito netting, the hundreds of biting sand fleas made sleep all but impossible, and life utterly miserable. Smudge fires were attempted once, but the coughing, nose-running, eye-burning results set most to enduring the hostile insects.

Insect life aside, the Rio Coco continued to be the Rio Coco. On the night of July 29, with the rain coming down harder than ever, Edson was forced to relocate his shelter to higher ground three times as the river rose 20 feet overnight. No one else did any better. All things considered, Edson felt that the wisest course of action for the following day was to give the day over to what rest could be had before battling the river again.

### **"Bandits"**

That day brought the first evidence that Edson's efforts to gain the trust of the Miskito were showing results. At mid-day, two Indians came into the patrol's camp to report seeing what they described as four "bandits" less than 2 miles upstream on



**A pair of Fokker tri-motor transport planes in service in Nicaragua in 1928. Aircraft were used to deliver supplies to Marine squadrons or patrols in need. Marine pilots delivered a much-needed resupply of dry clothes to the men of the Rio Coco Patrol.**

A break in the incessant rain on Aug. 5 brought a welcome relief from nature's onslaught and an equally welcome resupply of clothing. At mid-day a pair of Fokker tri-motor transports from Managua delivered the clothing, shoes and socks Edson had requested. The beards remained, but the members of the patrol would no longer look like so many down-at-the-heels and out-at-the-seat ragamuffins.

Despite nature's best attempts and the constant onslaught of biting, stinging insects, steady progress was being made. In the next three days Indian scouts reported only one contact with "bandits" who fled without offering resistance. This sole confrontation with Sandinistas strengthened Edson's growing confidence that the patrol had truly caught Sandino off guard with little in the line of combat power to contest Edson's advance. The river and the jungle may have continued to be formidable opponents, but thus far Edson was winning every encounter with Sandino's elements without having to fire a shot.

### Contact with the Enemy

That would change on Aug. 7 when friendly Indians reported Sandinistas preparing an ambush site no more than 3 miles upstream. Unseen by the Sandinistas, the Indians carefully recorded their numbers at a total of no more than 20 men, equally distributed between each bank of the river.

As potentially dangerous as the situation was, there also was the danger to the Sandinistas themselves, who could have fired into each other. Also in Edson's favor was the fact that the Sandinistas were unaware they had been detected. Edson was quick to see that the ambushers could well be ambushed themselves if he played his cards right. Merritt Edson set about doing just that.

Within minutes of being alerted to the danger ahead, Edson, with one platoon of 20 Marines and two Miskito scouts, surprised the Sandinista element on the north bank and in a brief but intense firefight, shot the Sandinistas to pieces. With Edson in the lead, the patrol charged headlong into the unsuspecting Sandinistas. Leaving four dead behind them, the Sandinistas fled. Edson then laid down a concentrated fire on the suspected site across the river. There was no return fire. There were no casualties among the Marines or Indians.

Three days later Marines cautiously entered Poteca. They were not opposed. Villagers reported to Edson that an estimated 15

"bandits" had left two days before. Sandino's attempt to carry the conflict into the Eastern District had been stopped before it could start. Sandino's plan to disrupt the elections was stillborn. By doing the unexpected, doing what "couldn't be done" and confronting Sandino with a situation for which he was unable to respond, Edson had completely altered conditions in Nicaragua.

With no outside interference, the election of 1928 was conducted without incident. Liberal Jose Maria Moncada was elected president in balloting that both sides agreed had been fairly conducted.

For his leadership and determination throughout the entire period of the Rio Coco Patrol and for his complete disregard for his personal safety during the engagement of Aug. 7, 1928, Merritt Edson would receive the Navy Cross. In August 1942 he would receive a second award of the Navy Cross for his courageous leadership of the 1st Raider Battalion during the seizure of Tulagi Island in the opening stages of the campaign for Guadalcanal. Later, on Guadalcanal itself, Merritt Edson would receive the Medal of Honor for his defense of "Edson's Ridge," which safeguarded the all-important Henderson Field.

The Rio Coco Patrol, as little-known as it is today, serves as a classic example of the principle of surprise. By doing exactly what Sandino least expected, from the direction Sandino had not expected at all, Merritt Edson, with 61 Marines and one U.S. Navy pharmacist's mate, completely altered events in Nicaragua in the important year of 1928.

Forty years later, in another war on the other side of the world, Edson's manner of establishing an association of trust and respect with the Miskito would serve as a foundation block for the Marine Corps successful Civic Action Program in Vietnam. In Nicaragua in 1928 Edson knew that you could not expect a man to stand beside you if you treated him as an inferior.

*Author's bio: Maj Allan C. Bevilacqua, a Leatherneck contributing editor, is a former enlisted Marine who served in the Korean and 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.*





# Marine Pursues a Life of Physical Fitness For Himself and Others

By Sgt Jessica Quezada, USMC  
Photos courtesy of  
Sgt Michael Eckert, USMC

**Above: Sgt Michael Eckert during his first trial of American Ninja Warrior in 2012 in Miami. He later competed in the finals by qualifying with the fifth-fastest time in the nation.**

**A**s world heavyweight boxing legend, Muhammad Ali once said, “I am an ordinary man who worked hard to develop the talent I was given. I believed in myself, and I believe in the goodness of others.”

This statement resonates profoundly with one Marine who made the decision at a young age to pursue a life of physical fitness.

Sergeant Michael Eckert is a Winter Park, Fla., native who began his athletic career as a child competing against his older brother.

“When I was growing up, I had one older brother so automatically I had competition against

someone,” said Eckert. “We had those natural tendencies as brothers to be better than each other, and I owe a lot of credit to him for why I became so competitive.”

“My dad nicknamed Mike ‘Peanut’ when he was very young,” said Frank, Eckert’s older brother. “I was always a big kid, and Mike was always much smaller than me. But no matter how angry Mike made me at times, I could never catch him. He was too agile and far better than me at physical activities. We’ve always had a deep running competitive edge with one another, but nowadays there’s no way I can keep up. He was consistently successful at everything he did ... and I think more than anything else, his personal drive to succeed has led him to where he is ... .”

Eckert participated in a plethora of sports growing

up, and in 2009, Eckert and a childhood friend decided to go indoor rock climbing. "Climbing allowed us to push ourselves to the limits like never before," said Taylor Dodge Brown, Eckert's longtime rock climbing partner. "This is where Mike really excelled. He was always pushing the envelope and inspiring not only me, but everyone around him at the gym to try harder. Through all the sports and activities we do in life, none other compares to climbing, and I look forward to growing old and teaching Mike 'the ways of the wall,' for that is one competition that will never get old."

Participating in these competitive sports not only highlighted Eckert's natural athleticism, but also drove him to compete against another challenger—himself.

"No matter who you beat, your biggest competitor is always going to be yourself, whether it be mentally or physically because you can never reach a limit where you're too good," said Eckert.

With this mindset, Eckert's aspirations grew as he watched professional athletes on TV battle daunting events such as "Sasuke" or "Ninja Warrior."

"I always wanted to try out for that, and one day I said 'I'm going to be on that show,'" said Eckert. "Shortly after, the American version came out, and in 2012 I submitted a video for the trials and I was selected."

That year, Eckert traveled to Miami for the "American Ninja Warrior" regional matches and achieved the fifth-fastest time in the nation.

"I qualified with a fast time, but I ended up failing the jumping spider at the finals," said Eckert. "At this part, you have to jump from a trampoline and catch yourself between two walls while hovering water ... It's really hard ... but I believe I did well for my first try, and being around other high-caliber peers was great."

### From "American Ninja Warrior" To Marine

Eckert decided to enlist in the Marine Corps in March 2013. "My life was scatter plotted and since I had family who served in the Army, I thought pursuing a military career was a good idea."

Eckert's father had served in the Army as a helicopter mechanic for six years before commissioning as a reservist. His brother eventually followed in his footsteps and served as an infantryman for four years.

As part of the long-standing sibling rivalry, Eckert decided to enlist in the Corps and to challenge himself in the world's greatest fighting force.

"I had to one-up them," said Eckert. "I wanted to take a step back and have a break while also taking a step forward, so I think the military was a very good decision for that. Everyone knows the Marine Corps for its intensity. We are all motivated motivators. I could have taken the easy route and chosen another branch, but I'm not looking back regretting my decision because of the stature that we have as Marines."

A year later, Eckert found himself back with other American Ninja Warriors qualifying in Miami and competing for the second time in Las



**Above: Sgt Eckert, right, attributes much of his professional success to his father, Frank Eckert, who served in the Army.**

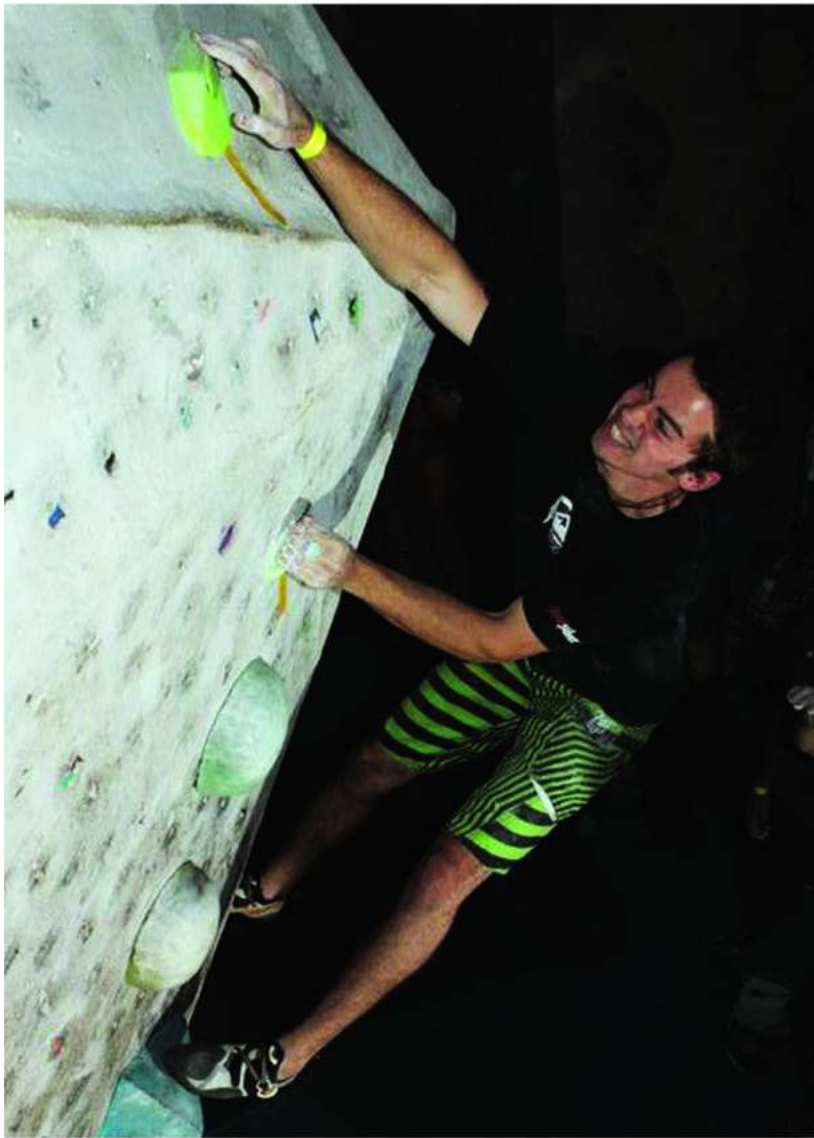
**Left: Completing the obstacle course at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, earlier this year with a time of 58 seconds, Eckert set a new record for the course, beating the previous record of 1 minute 17 seconds.**

Vegas. This time Eckert not only had the support of his family and friends, but of his unit as well.

"I went to represent myself and ultimately the Marine Corps," said Eckert. "They said 'hell yeah, we support your decision, you're doing something outside the box, go compete,' and my unit was there hyping me for everything I did."

### World Record Holder

Although Eckert's second attempt at the unforgiving spider wall was futile, his goals did not fade, and the old fitness challenges soon became the fuel that led him to breaking a world record.



**Eckert tries to grasp a hold during the Aiguille Rock Climbing Competition in Orlando, Fla., in 2011.**

"I was rock climbing years ago and used to do pull-ups as a warm up. My buddy randomly asked how many I could do and was impressed. He wanted to research the statistics, and I found out there was a record for most pull-ups performed in a minute," said Eckert. "I later enlisted, and the Marine Corps prides itself on doing pull-ups for the physical fitness test, so I started doing pull-ups again. I loved these things and I checked the recent record, and thought 'well I'm going for this damn record,' so I started training for it."

His first attempt at breaking the Guinness World Record for most pull-ups in a minute was not an official record due to lack of proof of the event. "Ultimately, it motivated me because I knew I was going to finally crush this thing," said Eckert. "On Oct. 11, 2015, I broke the original record of 44 pull-ups in one minute with my record of 50 pull-ups while at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan."

After this noteworthy accomplishment, Eckert continued to push himself. While attending the sergeants course at Camp Hansen in Okinawa, Japan, he came upon another record waiting to be broken.

In April 2016, Eckert and his fellow sergeants were faced with the well-known obstacle course,

which includes 14 events such as low hurdles, pull overs, a wall jump and 20 foot rope climb. Another Marine had completed the course with a time of one minute 17 seconds. Eckert heard this time and knew that for him, this was an easy challenge.

On the morning of his attempt, installation personnel showed up at the course at 0500 to verify Eckert's attempt, and without warming up, or doing a run through of the course, the timer began.

"It was cold, and I was a little timid and hesitant toward committing to any moves," said Eckert. "I ended up tripping over once, but I managed to complete the course in 58 seconds."

With a new record, Eckert received a certificate of achievement, the ultimate record title and many firm congratulatory handshakes.

"I think the Marine Corps has made me take my athletic career way more seriously," said Eckert. "Athleticism ... is taken seriously in this organization, and that was my snap to the head that maybe I should actually get some credibility for what I'm doing. It was the turning point of where my athletic career started getting significance." He added that the support and "brotherly nagging" he has gotten from his fellow Marines has driven him "to the next level."

Recently, this Marine Corps athlete also competed in the preliminary 2016 High Intensity Tactical Training Competition. Winners of the event received a funded trip to MCAS Miramar, Calif., for a chance to compete in the 2016 HITT Championship where Marines from across the globe would showcase their strengths. Eckert again proved his capabilities as the first-place winner and will be traveling to Twentynine Palms, Calif., in August where he is determined to claim the championship title and inspire servicemembers worldwide through his performance.

"It feels great to do this well, and the biggest thing about it is on a daily basis I have at least two or three people come up to me and say I'm an inspiration to them," said Eckert. "People message me here in Japan and back in the states about how I'm an inspiration, which truly fuels my fire and I'm so grateful for their support."

Following his many successes, Eckert has used these achievements to ground his stance in the fitness realm. This has allowed him to impart his experience and knowledge to other Marines and continue spreading the inspiration that others give to him.

"I started training with Mike to enhance my athleticism and improve my physical fitness all around," said Sgt Tyree Green, automotive mechanic with MWSS-171. "It's challenging and very stressful, and he showed me how to work out from a different perspective even though I was already strong before."

Green is one of several servicemembers whom Eckert has trained after obtaining his physical trainer certification in late 2015. Some of the coaching he provides for his clients stems from the motivation Eckert originally received from his father years before.

"My first year in 'American Ninja Warrior' I remember getting ready to compete, and I was



nervous as heck, and I remember what my dad told me,” said Eckert. “He couldn’t come down to Miami with me, so I spoke to him before I left and the last thing he said was ‘hey Mike, why not you?’ And I didn’t respond. I laughed and it didn’t hit me until I was about to run on that Miami course, and I thought, ‘why not me?’ What excuse do I have right now to not do what I’m about to do? I couldn’t come up with an answer, so I ran the course and ended up getting the fifth-fastest time in the nation. I took all the limitations I had been putting on myself as a person—new to the scene, event and situation and put them aside. I just did what I knew I could do. My dad asked ‘why not you,’ and I was so confused at first, but it made me try my best because ultimately I didn’t have an answer for that. There was no reason it couldn’t be me.”

Those three words impacted Eckert and have become the foundation of his passion to help others pursue their goals.

“The fact is I’ve been given the privilege and capability of doing things that some people can’t do,” said Eckert. “I have the ability to push my limits that people would give anything for. The Marine Corps has taught me to positively affect as many people as you can and inspire them,” said Eckert. “My goals include becoming a physical therapist because it’s something I could do for the rest of my life. I love the way the body works ... and finding new ways to help people recuperate through their injuries. ... I’m looking to get someone who had the same knee injury that I had and help them. The pain and hopelessness an athlete feels from not doing what they love is hard. The physical therapist helped me and got me back to normality. I think it’s awesome to guide someone, see them progress and see the results. You physically and mentally bring them back into the game.”



**Eckert has always been athletic. In 2008, while still in high school, he was a member of the 400 meter relay team at Winter Park High School, Winter Park, Fla., where he also participated in water polo, tennis, basketball, soccer, baseball, cross country and rock climbing.**



The triumphs of Eckert’s career highlight the impetus of commitment he has toward physical fitness, but in order to attain more, the athlete has decided to leave active-duty service.

“Honestly, with how things are in my life, I do see myself hanging up my uniform next March,” said Eckert. “I have some pretty big aspirations that I can’t complete while I’m serving simply because of the limitations. It’s not that I was trying to use the military and get what I could, it’s just a way to set myself up for success while giving back. Taking one step back while taking a step forward to realize what I needed to do and the Marine Corps has definitely helped me get there.”

After serving four years in the Marine Corps as a motor transport mechanic with 2d Maintenance Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 25, 2d Marine Logistics Group and MWSS-171, Marine Aircraft Group 12, Eckert is planning to return to civilian life.

“I want to bring people out of their shell, as many people as I can and give them the same realization I had at ‘American Ninja Warrior’ to make them think ‘why not you,’ ” said Eckert. “I will get to the top and push that buzzer at ‘American Ninja Warrior,’ I will succeed and I’ll use my abilities to create workout regimens and programs to help the masses. Those are my ultimate goals.”

*Author’s bio: Sgt Jessica Quezada is a Dallas, Texas, native who enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in January 2013 as a combat correspondent. Quezada reported to the Marine Corps Recruiting Command Public Affairs Office at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., in November 2013 and traveled across the nation to cover high-profile events pertinent to the command’s strategic recruiting mission. In November 2014, Quezada received orders to Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, where she currently serves as the PAO operations chief, NCOIC and combat correspondent.*

**Continually striving to improve his strength, Sgt Eckert exercises throughout the day using any available material. Here, an ammo can is used for additional weight.**



## New Micro Laser Range Finder Helps Marines Improve Accuracy

Marine Corps Systems Command is equipping Marines with a new range finder that will improve their accuracy and lethality on the battlefield.

The Micro Laser Range Finder, or MLRF, is a multifunction laser system that can be used in a variety of battlefield conditions. Whether mounted on a tripod, on a weapon or held by hand, the MLRF allows Marines to determine the range to targets, control fires and illuminate targets at night. It also provides Marines with unprecedented accuracy on the battlefield.

The MLRF is designed for use with the M2 .50-caliber heavy machine gun and MK-19 40 mm grenade machine gun, said Gunnery Sergeant Alfredo Uribe, equipment specialist for Optics and Non-Lethal Systems in MARCORSYSCOM's Infantry Weapons Systems (IWS). It improves

upon the former PEQ-15 laser system—which had a range of only 2,000 meters—allowing Marines to improve their shot accuracy from a distance and hit their target using fewer rounds.

“The PEQ-15 was just a laser dot; it didn't go far enough and there wasn't any range capability,” said Joseph Bernardoni, lead lifecycle logistician for Optics and Non-Lethal Systems, who added that with the MLRF, you can see the laser at 500 meters up to 10,000 meters with a day optic.

The built-in infrared light is another feature that helps guide Marines in battle, Bernardoni said. Because infrared light is invisible to the naked eye, the MLRF allows Marines to illuminate the battlefield under the cover of darkness.

“At nighttime, if they're able to light up a big area with infrared light, the other supporting Marines, with their night vision goggles, will be able to see that,”

Bernardoni said. “Without it, the infantry rifleman doesn't see anything that far. If Marines are put in a fighting position alongside infantry line companies, they can identify the distance, or range, [from which] the enemy is coming—like if there's a truck approaching—then call for fire, range and hit the target along with the other machine guns. It is faster than shooting a bunch of rounds, seeing what you're missing, and repeating the process.”

MARCORSYSCOM's IWS program acquires and fields systems that give Marines the firepower—lethal and non-lethal—to suppress both infantry and armored enemy resistance. Among these systems, the program office provides lasers, like the MLRF, to help Marines put rounds on targets in all conditions. IWS fielded the MLRF to Marines across the Corps this spring.

Ashley Calingo, MARCORSYSCOM



LCPL RYAN L. EDELMAN, USMC

A Marine with 2/5, 1stMarDiv, utilizes a weapon-mounted MLRF during a field exercise at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., May 24. The new, highly accurate laser system was fielded to Marines across the Corps this spring.



SGT BRANDON RIZZO, USMC

**Marine veteran Jenna Bisone swims to capture the gold medal in the 59-meter mixed freestyle event at the 2016 DOD Warrior Games, held at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., June 20.**

### Marine Veteran Turns Injury into Opportunity at 2016 Warrior Games

When she entered the Infantry Assaultman Leaders Course, Infantry Training Battalion (ITB), School of Infantry-East at Camp Geiger, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., in March 2015, Jenna Bisone didn't realize it was the beginning of the end of her time in her beloved Corps.

However, it was not the end of the camaraderie. A career-ending injury eventually led her to compete in the 2016 Department of Defense Warrior Games, a Paralympic-type event for wounded, ill and injured servicemembers, held this year at the U.S. Military Academy, West Point, N.Y., June 15-21. The opportunity allowed Bisone to face new challenges and to connect once again with her fellow Marines.

In 2015, Bisone was in one of the first companies to go through the ITB with female Marines among its ranks.

"I was one of the guinea pigs who went through the infantry courses to see if they wanted to allow females into the infantry," Bisone said. "When I went through 'Charlie' Company at ITB, our weapons split consisted of machine gunners, mortar men and assaultmen. We had females graduate in all of them."

Shortly before completing the course, Bisone suffered two breaks in her spinal cord that left her with back and leg problems, severely impairing her ability to function or walk normally.

But with the same tenacity for which the Marines are famous, she pushed on and completed two 20-kilometer (12.4 mile) marches within the last five days of the grueling course.

"Of course I didn't want to say, 'Hey, my back hurts,' because you know everyone else's back hurts—we're all carrying the same amount of weight," said Bisone.

She graduated the course, but her symptoms had worsened during the last march.

"I went to Marine Corps Engineer

School [MCES] without saying anything," Bisone said. "I trained with them, but it got to the point that my legs were weak; they were dragging. I had nerve damage. I was like, 'OK, maybe I should go see someone; stop letting my pride get in the way.' ... The command at MCES recognized that I was actually injured. They didn't dampen my morale, because it was already injured by the fact that I was probably going to get out of the Marine Corps, and that was not my plan."

MCES allowed her to put in a packet for Wounded Warrior Regiment, where she would have a chance to heal.

"At Wounded Warrior Regiment, there was always someone to talk to. They're always like, 'Hey, let's try this sport; let's see if we can strengthen you back to where you want to be,'" Bisone said. "They took care of me, and I think that's the best adaptive rehabilitation—actually having that family there that's just like, 'What do you need?'"

During her time at the Wounded Warrior Regiment, she found out about the Marine Corps Trials for people who wanted to compete in the 2016 Warrior Games and decided to give it a try. It turned out to be a beneficial move.

"I don't think since I've been retired I've felt this happy," Bisone said. "It's awesome. It's not really about winning; it's kind of more about the camaraderie. You've got your Marines next to you. You're meeting new people from all over, like the [United Kingdom] teams, the Air Force teams, the Army teams and the Navy teams. So you're constantly hanging out and talking to people and doing what you love."

Bisone won the silver medal in the open Standing Rifle competition and the gold medal in the 59-meter Mixed Freestyle swimming competition. She said she urges other wounded or injured servicemembers to try out for the Warrior Games next year.

"If you love any of these sports, just do it," she said. "What can you lose? You make friends; you get to go to new places. I think it's just wonderful."

Sgt Brandon Rizzo, USMC

### F-35B Makes First Trans-Atlantic Flight

Marines with Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron (VMX) 1 and a Royal Air Force pilot on exchange with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron (VMFAT) 501 successfully conducted the



SSGT MARK FAYLOGA, USMC

**An F-35B Lightning II is refueled by an Air Force KC-10 during the model's first trans-Atlantic flight, June 29. Three F-35Bs flew from MCAS Beaufort, S.C., to RAF Fairford, Gloucestershire, England, piloted by Marines with VMX-1 and a member of the Royal Air Force.**

first ever trans-Atlantic flight of the F-35B Lightning II, June 29.

Lieutenant Colonel Richard Rusnok and Major Jack Cronan, along with Royal Air Force squadron leader Hugh Nichols, piloted three F-35B aircraft from Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, S.C., across the Atlantic Ocean, landing at Royal Air Force Base Fairford, Gloucester, England.

“Our main focus is supporting the [United Kingdom’s] introduction and service of the F-35B,” said LtCol Rusnok.

The flight took more than eight hours and required the F-35Bs to be refueled by two U.S. Air Force KC-10 Extenders.

“It’s always a long day; it’s always tiring, but it’s a great feeling of achievement when you get the [aircraft] to a different country,” said Nichols.

The F-35B variant of the Joint Strike Fighter is a fifth-generation stealth multi-role fighter aircraft, capable of conducting ground attack and air defense missions, short takeoff and vertical landings.

“The arrival of Lightning in the UK is an important step toward our delivery of operational capability with the UK’s first-ever stealth fighter aircraft,” said Air Commodore Harvey Smyth, the Royal Air Force’s F-35 force commander.

This is the first time these aircraft have landed in the United Kingdom, but pilots from the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy have been embedded with VMFAT-501 for the past few years, training to fly the F-35B.

“This is an important partnership between the United States and the United Kingdom as we move forward,” said Rusnok. “The Marine Corps is helping introduce this aircraft to the public and really to the international community.”

The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force will officially adopt the F-35B in 2018.

The U.S. Marine Corps, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy team spent several weeks in the United Kingdom demonstrating the capabilities of the F-35B, including flying in the Royal International Air Tattoo and the Farnborough International Air Show.

Sgt Eric Keenan, USMC

### Ceremony Honors Those Who Died Fighting the Battle of Okinawa

Footsteps pattered over hot walkways as people made their way to a shady alcove, lined by stone walls engraved with the names of those whose lives were lost during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945.

Okinawa residents, U.S. servicemem-

bers and officials gathered on June 23 at the Peace Memorial Park in Itoman, Okinawa, Japan, for the 2016 Okinawa Memorial Services.

A U.S. ceremony was held in the morning by the memorial walls, and an Okinawan ceremony was held at the center of the park. Thousands sat in rows of chairs, lined the perimeter and sat in the shade surrounding the stage where the ceremony took place.

“Seventy-one years ago we concluded the 90-day, very, very challenging battle here on Okinawa,” said Lieutenant General Lawrence D. Nicholson, Commanding General, III Marine Expeditionary Force. “It was the last large battle of the war. Today, we take time to remember the great loss of life on the American side, the Japanese armed forces’ side and the Okinawa civilian side. It is good that every year we stop and honor those who we have lost.”

The ceremony began with an invocation by Lieutenant Commander Ulysses L. Ubalde, USN, the deputy chaplain of Marine Corps Installations-Pacific, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, and speeches by LtGen Nicholson and Joel Ehrendreich, United



ADELE LUPHAUS-CONNER, QUANTICO SENTRY

**CENTENNIAL ON CANVAS**—Former combat artist and Marine Corps Reserve veteran Kristopher Battles adds detail to a painting he was commissioned to create for the centennial celebration of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in his Spotsylvania, Va., studio, July 18. The painting depicts Marines in the uniform of each war in which the reservists have served.



**LtGen Lawrence D. Nicholson, CG, III MEF, delivers the opening remarks at the 2016 Okinawa Memorial Services at Okinawa Peace Memorial Park, Itoman, Okinawa, Japan, on June 23. The services honored those who lost their lives during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945.**

distinguished visitors from the U.S. and Japanese government presented wreaths that were placed against the memorial walls.

Side by side, Americans and Okinawans gazed at the memorial site and paid their respects to the fallen. Fingers traced countless engraved names as people stood together in silence.

“The United States and Japan have worked together to ensure the security of this region for 71 years,” said LtGen Nicholson. “We thank all of you who are here to remember those who preceded us and paid that great price, so that today we can enjoy freedom in our country, in Japan and on this great island of Okinawa.”

Cpl Janessa Pon, USMC



States Consul General in Naha, the largest city in Okinawa Prefecture.

“When I first visited this beautiful site after I arrived on Okinawa, I was moved by the quiet, yet powerful message,” said Ehrendreich. “We are surrounded by the carefully inscribed names of more than

240,000 individuals who died in this battle—an indelible reminder of our past struggles and our responsibilities to avoid the horrors of war. The lives lost are a heartbreaking reminder that freedom has a painful cost.”

In honor of the fallen, the speakers and

## Crazy Caption Contest

### Winner



CPL DEMETRIUS MORGAN, USMC

“Damn—Grab my lunch!”

Submitted by  
Greg Manning, USMC 1970-74  
Church Hill, Md.

### This Month's Photo



CPL WESLEY TIMM, 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.

# Veteran Works With Fellow Marines To Bring Healing Through Horsemanship

By Tricia Carzoli  
Photos courtesy of BraveHearts  
Therapeutic Riding and  
Educational Center

**H**onor, courage and commitment: The very mettle that Marine Corps veteran Corporal Nicholas “Nick” Montijo clung to, compelling him to persevere through the most difficult time in his life, is the very same resolve that inspires Montijo to lead other veterans to peace.

Injured during his deployment to Afghanistan, when Montijo returned home he also had to heal his invisible wounds. While struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder, Montijo found BraveHearts Therapeutic Riding and Educational Center in Harvard, Ill. It was there that he not only found the strength to live with honor, but also the courage and commitment to bring others with him, making history as the first wounded warrior to begin as a participant in a Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH Intl.) Premier Accredited Center therapeutic riding program and then to become a PATH-certified riding instructor.

In 2009, the effects of severe PTSD devastated the Marine veteran’s life. Montijo’s mother and sister noticed that he would shut himself inside his home for weeks and was unable to care for himself or to assimilate to civilian life. When suicide began to permeate Montijo’s thoughts, he sought help at Clement J. Zablocki Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wis. He was hospitalized for 2½ months followed by four months of residential treatment.

“I was doing nothing but sitting in my room all day, and one day my recreation therapist encouraged me to try something different. She suggested that I come out to BraveHearts,” Montijo recalled. “I thought it was better than not doing anything at all.”

Unfortunately, he only was allowed to groom the horses as paperwork from his physician was lost—twice.

But when he left the residential treatment program, Montijo had committed himself to learning to ride. He went to BraveHearts on his own—this time, he rode.

Immediately, he felt the deep connection between the horses and himself.

“I didn’t think anything would come



**Cpl Nicholas “Nick” Montijo, the first wounded warrior to begin as a participant and then become a PATH-certified riding instructor, stands with Hank at the BraveHearts Therapeutic Riding and Educational Center in Harvard, Ill.**

of it; I didn’t know it would change my life—and change the lives of others,” Montijo admitted.

President and Chief Operating Officer of BraveHearts and PATH Master Level

**Immediately, he felt the deep connection between the horses and himself.**

**“I didn’t think anything would come of it;**

**I didn’t know it would change my life—and change the lives of others.”**

**—Nicholas “Nick” Montijo**

Instructor Meggan Hill-McQueeney recalled her early encounters with Montijo.

“This was all new and foreign to him, but Nick found peace and confidence here,” Hill-McQueeney said.

The BraveHearts staff worked on Montijo’s riding technique, but the horses

were the ones that had the greatest impact.

BraveHearts Director of Operations and PATH Registered Level Instructor Paddy McKeivitt oversees the veteran program. He explained that horses have a heightened sense of emotion. When Montijo struggled with anxiety, his horse became uneasy.

McKeivitt said horses are prey animals, “so they must be attuned to their environment in order to survive.”

“Horses create a biofeedback loop. They can sense if you are anxious or if you are too assertive. The horses can’t function in either zone. Veterans learn to find that middle ground and, as they learn to self-regulate emotions in the moment with the horse, they learn to be able to regulate their emotions in other areas [of life] as well,” McKeivitt said. “Healing works best when we all do our jobs. We get the veterans on their horse and we teach them horsemanship. ... It is the horses that teach the veterans about trust, love and respect.”

“Horses live in the moment; they don’t care about yesterday or tomorrow. They live in the here and now,” Montijo said. “The horses taught me that I couldn’t worry about yesterday or tomorrow or what happened earlier.” Learning to live in

the present and how to adjust in different situations helped him feel more confident around others, he said.

As Montijo demonstrated his commitment to improving his horsemanship skills, both McKeivitt and Hill-McQueeney said they saw a natural softness in Montijo that is essential in an instructor. They also were impressed with Montijo's retention and application.

"We'd been looking for a Nick for a very long time," Hill-McQueeney said, explaining that BraveHearts staff and the board of directors had been seeking a PATH-certified therapeutic riding instructor who also was a veteran. Hill-McQueeney knew it would strengthen the veteran program and introduce therapeutic riding to more veterans.

"Ultimately, Nick found that in becoming an instructor, he could help others," Hill-McQueeney said. She and McKeivitt worked with him and, with the courage, honor, commitment and heart of a Marine, Montijo became a Registered Level Instructor in record time.

"I wanted to encourage other veterans, but I also wanted to honor Dr. [Rolf M.] Gunnar [who established free services at BraveHearts for veterans] and really try to pay it forward like he did for me," Montijo said of Dr. Gunnar, a Korean War veteran and recipient of the Bronze Star with combat "V." As a captain in the U.S. Army, Gunnar provided medical care on the front line. He is a renowned cardiologist who cemented the success of the veteran program by establishing the initial relationship between BraveHearts and VA hospitals throughout the Chicago-land area. Gunnar is the chairman of the board of directors and co-founder of BraveHearts.

"This wouldn't be here if it weren't for him," Montijo said of BraveHearts and the veteran program.

While Montijo had committed himself to helping other veterans and honoring the generosity of Gunnar, it was his courage that would be tested during his early days as an instructor.

Because Montijo had seen gravely injured children while serving in Afghanistan, working with children brought up memories he desperately tried to avoid. As an instructor, he requested to work only with adults. Unbeknownst to him, the one battle he didn't want to fight was just a few steps ahead of him.

Not long after Montijo had been certified, BraveHearts welcomed a group of terminally ill children, and Hill-McQueeney was short-staffed. She knew Montijo was hesitant, but she needed him. "I told him I would be right there. I told him we would do this," she said.



**Cpl Fred J. Busby, a Marine veteran and retired police officer, is a newly certified PATH Registered Level Instructor. He was inspired to ride after meeting Montijo.**



**Marine veteran, Marshall R. Wolfe, rides in the BraveHearts outdoor arena.**



**Montijo, left, instructs U.S. Air Force veteran Evangeline Patino during her lesson at the BraveHearts facility in Illinois.**



**Busby, riding in the outdoor arena at the BraveHearts Riding center, said he became an instructor to help fellow veterans.**

Montijo focused on Hill-McQueeney's confidence in him. "She was like my platoon leader. If your platoon leader has confidence in you, you just do it. You will follow them anywhere," he said. "Because of her, I did it."

Montijo not only helped grant wishes that day, he also gained confidence in his own ability to conquer some of those haunting images.

Inspired by that reassurance, Montijo sought to bring as many veterans through the program as possible. He had proven to himself and to the BraveHearts organization that a veteran with very little equine experience could achieve instructor status, and he was a catalyst for the increasing veteran participation noted at BraveHearts because the veterans find camaraderie with him they don't have with other instructors.

Currently, BraveHearts has the largest veteran program in the nation by numbers served. The organization provides services to veterans free of charge. Last year alone, BraveHearts served 534 veterans in 10,557 sessions. Hill-McQueeney said that having Montijo on staff could account for the recent rise in numbers.

"Other vets want to work with him. They want to be him. He is a role model. ... He paved the way for other vets to be in the program," Hill-McQueeney said.

When Montijo became the first PATH-certified wounded warrior in the nation to move from participant to instructor, McKeVitt and Hill-McQueeney said they were determined to take the next step: adding more veterans to their staff.

In March, Montijo, along with McKeVitt and Hill-McQueeney, helped certify four new instructors in the first-in-the-nation, all-veteran cohort. One of those veterans, Cpl Fred J. Busby, also is a Marine.

"[Busby] truly lives the Marine Corps values. He wants to be around other Marines and other veterans. I think what is special about him is that he has a willingness to share with other people and help them. He is willing to sit and talk with others to bolster their confidence and go the extra mile. He has the sort of personality that makes others want to be around him," Montijo said of his fellow Marine.

Busby traveled to BraveHearts with Marine Corps veteran Cpl Marshall R. Wolfe to look at the facility. Together, they watched a board member work with a wild mustang in the round pen, and Busby was mesmerized.

"I was about to leave with Marshall when Meggan [Hill-McQueeney] turned to me and said, 'You want to go in, don't you?' And I said, 'Yes, ma'am,'" Busby recalled.

Hill-McQueeney directed him to get in a catcher's position, and the mustang approached him. "I could feel the horse



breathing in my ear,” he said. “Then the horse knocked up against me almost knocking me over. It was a spiritual moment—no one knew what I had going on. They didn’t know all I was dealing with. ... Then I met Nick, and I wanted to ride.”

Busby said despite the fact that he and Nick Montijo have different backgrounds, they still sought a similar peace. As a veteran and a recently retired police officer who had lost a child, Busby said he was looking for the next door to open. He described his first experience with a mustang as incredible and said he wanted to bring that same feeling to other veterans.

“The connection between a horse and a veteran—there are no words to describe it. But I know what it is like, because it happened to me. And it can’t be explained,” Busby said. “I want other veterans to get into the round pen and experience it themselves. That is why I became an instructor.”

Marine values demonstrated by Montijo made the difference to Busby. “When you are a Marine, you just do the Marine thing; you don’t leave anyone behind,” he said.

As a fellow Marine, Montijo encouraged Busby throughout the process. “Nick and I had no horse background, but Nick inspired me. I knew that if he could do it, so could I,” Busby said.

Wolfe, like Busby, said he also felt an immediate bond with Montijo.

“There is something that happens when you say, ‘Semper Fi,’” he said. “Suddenly, you are family.”

In addition to feeling comfortable with Montijo, Wolfe said he liked being at BraveHearts and being surrounded by the veterans so much that he volunteered to be a sidewalker and leader and, eventually, he decided to ride, too.

He said the process of becoming a better horseman, assisting others and working with those with special needs had a reciprocal effect.

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**“I thought I was strong, but connecting with the horses and working with other veterans has been healing for me. I guess I needed it, even though I didn’t think I did.”**

**—Marshall R. Wolfe**

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“I see these younger guys coming here with traumatic brain injury, PTSD, horrible injuries. I thought I was strong, but connecting with the horses and working with other veterans has been healing for me,” Wolfe said. “I guess I needed it, even though I didn’t think I did.”

Wolfe soon will join Montijo and Busby as a PATH Registered Level Instructor, and he said he looks forward to encourag-

ing his Marine and veteran brothers and sisters.

Montijo said he feels as though he’s come full circle. He remembers where he came from, and he’s watched Busby and Wolfe overcome their own insecurities as they join him on this mission to bring about healing for as many veterans as they can. He admits, however, that there still are days he struggles.

Montijo said that on those days he finds that his fellow Marines and those who come for lessons are what force him to dig into that deep-rooted Marine courage to get out of bed and to show up. “I don’t want to let these guys down,” Montijo said.

Together, Montijo, Busby and Wolfe make up a Marine dream team for BraveHearts. They are always faithful to country, to God and to each other.

Wolfe said, “The best of the best is right here—this program, these people. I get to be a part of it.”

He expressed admiration and respect for Montijo. “He is a good mentor; I look up to him. He is my NCO [noncommissioned officer], my sergeant major,” Wolfe said. “He is my go-to guy. He will always be there. He’s got more than your six. He’s got your 360.”

*Author’s bio: Tricia Carzoli is a freelance writer and photographer from Illinois whose work has appeared both locally and nationally.*



**From left: BraveHearts Director of Operations Paddy McKevitt, Cpl Nicholas Montijo and BraveHearts Chief Operating Officer Meggan Hill-McQueeney talk with each other alongside horses Azul, Huff and Hank.**

## Useful Island, Antarctica

### A Warm Tribute in a Cold Climate

Kelsie Brumet, left, took her late grandfather's Marine Corps flag with her during a recent research trip to Antarctica, to honor the memory of her grandfather, Colonel William D. Hubbard. Col Hubbard retired from the Marine Corps in 1979 after 27 years of service, and passed away in 1997. During his life, Hubbard traveled to six of the seven continents, missing only the southernmost continent. His granddaughter finished his world travels for him. Brumet's friend, MJ Rice, right, helped display the flag in the Dec. 23, 2015, photo.

Submitted by Ann E. Hubbard



COURTESY OF ANNE E. HUBBARD

## Macomb, Ill.

### Iwo Jima Veteran Receives 100th Birthday Surprise

After representatives from the Young Marines, a nonprofit youth education and service program for school-age children, learned that Marine veteran John Moon, believed to be the oldest living survivor of the invasion of Iwo Jima, was nearing his 100th birthday, they took it upon themselves to create a meaningful gift that would show their appreciation for Moon's service to his nation.

In March, a group of 11 Young Marines traveled to Guam and Iwo Jima to attend the Reunion of Honor, taking along a personalized birthday banner made for Moon, who was wounded during the Battle of Iwo Jima. Through research, they were able to pinpoint Moon's landing location on the beach, and they took a photograph with the banner on the spot where he landed during the invasion. The Young



COURTESY OF YOUNG MARINES

Marines also took the banner and an American flag with them to the top of Mount Suribachi, where additional photos were taken. They framed the photos, along with a vial of sand from Iwo Jima and the flag.

During Moon's 100th birthday celebration, which was held at the VFW Post 1921 in Macomb, Ill., a group from the Young Marines presented the gifts. LtCol William Davis, USMC (Ret), the national executive director and CEO of the Young Marines, above left, and Lucas Ward, the national Young Marine of the Year from the Peoria, Ill., Young Marines unit, above right, presented the gifts to John Moon, center. Members of the Midwest Central Young Marines and William L. Smith, chairman of the Young Marines' board of directors were among those in attendance.

Submitted by Andy Richardson

## Montgomery, Ala.

### Gen "Howlin' Mad" Smith Inducted Into Alabama Lawyers' Hall of Fame

On May 1, General Holland M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith was inducted into the Alabama Lawyers' Hall of Fame. Gen Smith's great-nephew, Thomas Krebs, a Birmingham attorney and decorated Marine Vietnam veteran, received the Hall of Fame award on behalf of his great-uncle, who died in 1967 at the age of 84.

Before serving in the Marine Corps Gen Smith received a Bachelor of Science degree from Auburn University (then known as Alabama Polytechnic Institute) in 1901. He began his military career in the Alabama National Guard and obtained his Bachelor of Laws degree from the University of Alabama in 1903.

Several Marine Corps League members from local detachments attended the ceremony, including, from left to right, Carl Jones, Capt Austin Brown, Danny Rooks, 1stSgt Kendra Spuesens and Ed Smith.



COURTESY OF THOMAS KREBS

Submitted by Thomas Krebs

## Triangle, Va.

### Two Generous Donations to National Museum of the Marine Corps

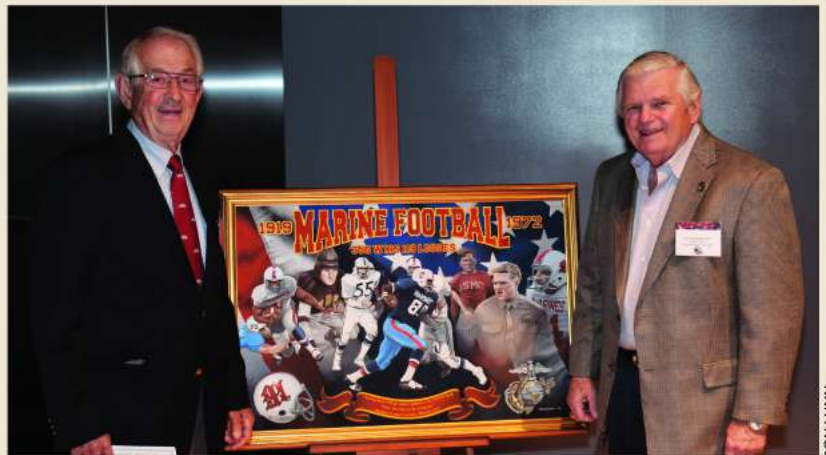
Two donors made memorable contributions to the National Museum of the Marine Corps this past spring.

On May 10, Lieutenant Colonel Ron Eckert, USMC (Ret), presented the museum with his collection of Marine Corps sports memorabilia, including the painting "Marine Football, Semper Fi on the Field," which he had commissioned by artist Jason Breidenbach. "Preserving this memorabilia was a way I could keep the program going long after it ended," said LtCol Eckert. "It was a privilege to be part of this particular piece of history, and now I hope that with this donation others can be part of it as well," he added. At the presentation with Eckert was his college football coach, Dr. Arthur Pilch, left.

On April 20, artist Philip Corley donated his painting, "Coming Home," to the museum. "Coming Home" depicts the celebration of Marines being welcomed back from deployment. Corley's son, Stephen, a Marine veteran said, "My father is happy [the painting] is going to the right home."

"Coming Home" was featured on the cover of the December 2014 issue of *Leatherneck*. From left to right: Tom Corley, Geraldine Donnelly, Philip Corley and Stephen Corley attended the presentation.

Submitted by Stephen Corley



RON LUNN



RON LUNN

**"Corps Connections,"** highlights the places and events through which active-duty and veteran Marines connect with one another, honor the traditions of the Corps and recognize the achievements of their fellow leathernecks.

We welcome submissions of photos from events like the ones featured here. Send them to: Kelsey Ripa, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or e-mail them to [k.ripa@mca-marines.org](mailto:k.ripa@mca-marines.org). Submission does not guarantee publication, and we cannot guarantee the return of photos.



## CMC Overhauls Corps' Fitness Program

On July 1, Headquarters Marine Corps announced that significant revisions have been made to the Corps' physical fitness program, to include the Physical Fitness Test (PFT), Combat Fitness Test (CFT) and Body Composition Program (BCP). Changes to BCP will take effect immediately while PFT and CFT changes will be implemented Jan. 1, 2017.

"Last November we began a comprehensive review of physical fitness and body composition standards," said General Robert B. Neller, 37th Commandant of the Marine Corps. "Subsequent efforts focused on developing a physical fitness program that incentivizes behavior toward an end state of a healthy and fit force able to better answer the call in any clime and place."

Immediate changes to the BCP include an increase in the maximum weight standards for females and implementation of better equipment for determining height and weight for all Marines. The authority for granting a BCP waiver will be passed from the deputy commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to the first general officer in a Marine's chain of command.

The revisions take physical performance

into consideration when considering BCP. Marines who score 285 and higher (out of a possible 300) on both the PFT and the CFT now will be exempt from height and weight standards. Marines who score between 250 and 284 will have their maximum body fat percentage increased by one percent. For example, if a Marine has a maximum body fat percentage of 19 percent, a score between 250 and 284 on both the PFT and CFT will allow him or her to have 20 percent body fat without penalty.

Changes to the PFT include a pull-up/push-up hybrid for both males and females. This eliminates the option for the flexed-arm hang for females, starting in January.

Although Marines can earn points for doing either of the exercises, the maximum amount of points a Marine can earn doing push-ups is 70 points versus 100 for achieving the maximum number of pull-ups. This means the highest PFT score a Marine can earn if they choose to do push-ups is 270.

Marines will also have to complete more crunches for maximum score on their next PFT, with scoring determined according to age and gender. There will be a slight adjustment to the 3-mile run for Marines in higher age brackets, and the PFT and CFT age brackets will be divided

into eight groups rather than the existing four. The new groups are as follows: 17-20; 21-25; 26-30; 31-35; 36-40; 41-45; 46-50; and 51+.

Changes to the CFT will consist of adjusted scoring for all three events to correspond with the eight age brackets. The most drastic change will be an increase in the number of ammo can lifts required for a perfect score. For example, male Marines between the ages of 31 and 35 will have to complete 120 lifts for a perfect score, rather than 97; and female Marines between the ages of 26 and 30 will have to complete 75 lifts for a perfect score, rather than 63.

Another change to the CFT is that all Marines will be required to do five push-ups instead of three during the "maneuver under fire" portion of the test.

"The new PFT and CFT standards raise the bar on physical fitness for all Marines," said Major General James W. Lukeman, Commanding General, Training and Education Command. "Marines today are stronger, faster and fitter than ever, and these changes reflect that. Bigger and stronger often means heavier, so tying performance on the PFT and CFT to changes to the Body Composition Program are improvements that we think the Marines will appreciate. In the end, it's



CPL LAURA MERCADO, USMC



LCPL JOSE VILLALOBOSROCHA, USMC

Candidates with "Lima" and "India" Companies, Marine Corps Officer Candidates School, above left, complete the pull-up portion of their initial PFT at MCB Quantico, Va., May 24. Effective Jan. 1, 2017, the flexed-arm hang option for females will be eliminated from the PFT and replaced with a pull-up/push-up hybrid option for both males and females. Officer candidates, above right, with "India" Co conduct the ammo can lift during a CFT at OCS, MCB Quantico, Va., June 16. Changes to the CFT's scoring system will be implemented Jan. 1, 2017.

all about improving the readiness and combat effectiveness of our Corps, and the physical fitness of every Marine contributes to that.”

TECOM will monitor the effects of these adjustments for two years and then readjust if required to ensure the standards contribute to the effectiveness of the force.

Additional details, including the new PFT/CFT scoring tables, physical fitness training recommendations and BCP adjustments are available at <https://fitness.usmc.mil>.

Sgt Cuong Le, USMC

### DOD Safe Helpline Offers Support to Sexual Assault Victims

Launched in February 2011, the Safe Helpline serves as the Department of Defense’s sole hotline for victims of sexual assault and is operated by the DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO), through a contract with the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), the nation’s largest anti-sexual violence organization.

The Safe Helpline provides live, confidential intervention and referral services via telephone and text message, specifically tailored to the military community and designed to help build confidence in the reporting process. In addition, Safe Helpline services also include support for transitioning servicemembers, an enhanced website featuring a refined sexual assault resource search tool, a self-care mobile application and an online secure group chat service called the Safe HelpRoom.

Since 2011, more than 60,000 survivors, family members, colleagues and others have reached out to the Safe Helpline for support, and in more than one million instances, people have accessed information and resources through the Safe Helpline website.

“It’s a hard thing when you first disclose a sexual assault, [and] creating this space so that members of the DOD community can do that really enables them to get the help they need,” said Scott Berkowitz, president of RAINN.

The initial disclosure has a critical impact on a survivor’s path to healing, according to Berkowitz. “Having a place where there are trained, compassionate people who can provide a positive first response can make all the difference. Sometimes they don’t even have the words to describe what has happened to them and they need a safe environment to talk that through,” he added.

Denise Usher, a Safe Helpline shift manager, said that because the program’s services are anonymous and confidential, they do not record or maintain transcripts of calls or chats.



LCPL DAVE FLORES, USMC

**CHRISTMAS YOU MISSED—LCpl Mark Uriarte, a team leader with 1st Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment, was deployed during the holiday season but got a chance to enjoy the festivities with his son, Kai, during Armed Services YMCA’s first “Christmas You Missed” event at Marine Corps Air-Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., June 25. More than 35 families were in attendance, and despite 100-degree temperatures, children played in “snow,” visited with Santa Claus, and enjoyed the opportunity to make up for lost time.**

“Some people come to the Safe Helpline just minutes after they are assaulted, but some come years later,” Berkowitz said. “We want to be a place where people are always comfortable reaching out; we want to make sure that the help we offer is what they’re looking for and that it supports their recovery. This means continuing to innovate and develop new resources that support the needs of survivors.”

While the collaboration between DOD SAPRO, RAINN and the military services has yielded significant improvements in care for military members, the organization’s hope is that the need for the effort will one day subside.

“DOD has taken great strides to ad-

dress the problem of sexual assault. I’m optimistic that those will continue and that over time we will be able to reduce the number of sexual assaults,” Berkowitz said. “Until that point, we are working hard to make the Safe Helpline a source of confidential, anonymous help—a resource that people trust.”

Members of the DOD community who have been affected by sexual assault can access 24/7 secure, confidential, and anonymous support through the DOD Safe Helpline at [www.safehelpline.org](http://www.safehelpline.org), or by calling (877) 995-5247.

Amaani Lyle, DOD News



# Books Reviewed

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS EMBLEMS: 1804 to World War I.** By Frederick L. Briuer. Published by Schiffer Military History. 224 pages. Stock #0764350684. \$45 MCA members. \$49.99 Regular Price.

OUTSTANDING, MARINE!

That is what I say about Dr. Frederick Briuer's book, "United States Marine Corps Emblems: 1804 to World War I."

Briuer takes the reader along for a thoroughly researched and documented historical stroll through the evolution of one of the world's most recognizable insignias from its inception to what we know today—The United States Marine Corps' Eagle, Globe and Anchor.

Research was conducted for almost two decades as the author accessed many former collections that have since been broken up as well as capturing many old time collectors knowledge of folklore and myth. Details were captured and documented that would have been lost with time.

Briuer used the same methodology to write this book as he did while working as a research archaeologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. With more than 100 published articles in his field, he has a great grasp of detail and the ability to convey that detail in words. His fondness for the Marine Corps developed during his active-duty years 1959-63.

The book is filled with hundreds of photographs of original, fake and fantasy Marine Corps emblems, ornaments or devices. Briuer provides the reader with 1:1 ratio size photographs of all examples

as well as historical and contemporary photographs of Marines wearing insignias and of artifacts contained in museums and private collections. Some of the amazing items he was able to photograph include original dies used to strike emblems from the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

He has meticulous tables with reference points as to the weight of the emblems, ornaments or devices as well as the thickness of metal used to die strike, the method of attachment of the loops, wires or posts

There are two areas where the book falls short. The opposite sides of the majority of the emblems, ornaments or devices are not pictured. The research for the book was done so long ago that this piece of the collectors' knowledge base today was not relevant at that point in time and therefore was not documented. Since many of the collections he accessed are not centrally located, he could not retrace those steps. While some may view this as a major issue, I can assure

you that his research far outweighs that piece of the puzzle.

The second area lacking is that the modern-day eagle, globe, and anchors are not included in this volume as well. We will need to wait for Volume 2 to cover the multitude of changes and variations that await us from 1922 until the modern era.

Alec Tulkoff

*Author's bio: Alec Tulkoff is the author of "Grunt Gear: USMC Combat Infantry Uniforms of World War II" and "Equipping The Corps: 1892-1937 Volume 1."*

**THE M240 MACHINE GUN: From USGI to the Ohio Ordnance M240 SLR.** Published by Texas Review Press. 80 pages. Stock #1937875830. \$8.06 MCA Members. \$8.95 Regular Price.

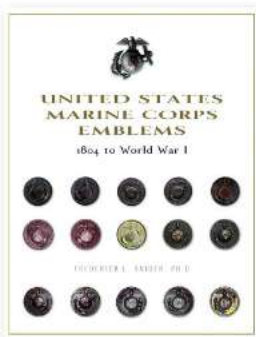
Common sense to the contrary, specialized texts on newly developed ordnance for the safety, security, and, indeed, survival, of our skilled soldiers rarely enter the venue of the book reviewer. Written to introduce, instruct, influence, and even serve as long-lasting sources of inspiration, they elude publicity, acknowledgment and appreciation within the fraternity of America's fighting men.

Cases in point—"The M240 Machine Gun, From USGI M240 to the Ohio Ordnance M240-SLR" and "The Browning Automatic Rifle—From the 1918 to the 1918A3-SLR."

From new recruits, to elderly armchair war buffs, everyone knows that weapons without courage are worthless, as are the bravest warriors without superior weapons to protect themselves and their country. As Captain Sir Basil Liddell Hart wrote in his classic "Thoughts on War," "The moral and material are interdependent. Courage soon oozes when soldiers lose confidence in their weapons."

Author Paul Ruffin adds, "Your Marine and ... Marine readers may be interested in the new version of the Ohio Ordnance M240 SLR, as well as both the old and new BAR.

Except for the fact that the OO weapons are semi-automatic, you'd never know one from the real thing. The M240-SLR ... damned well-made. Robust. Shoots like a dream. Coolest gun you could ever put your shoulder to. Even cleaning it piece by piece is fun. Light machine guns will



Each of these early versions of the Marine Corps emblem was worn at a different time between the 1820s and 1890s. (Photos courtesy of Frederick L. Briuer, Ph.D., from his book "United States Marine Corps Emblems: 1804 to World War I.")

continue to come and go over the years. But none are likely to enjoy the enduring romantic allure of the BAR, or the genius behind M240-SLR.” Especially the veterans of World War II, the Korean and Vietnam wars who fired the earlier versions.

Laid out in less than six short chapters each, with ample photographs enhancing specific subsections strategically placed to ensure reader understanding, each book begins with a simple, smooth overview of the guns’ origins.

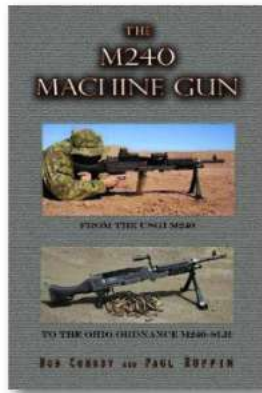
Ruffin’s respect of the Ohio Ordnance Works shines throughout, as on the dedication page: “... to independent firearm companies like Ohio Ordnance which fill the needs that sometimes we don’t even know we have.”

Although the consummate aficionado (Ruffin recently purchased his own M240-SLR for \$14,000), he is nonetheless a scholar-historian unafraid of the 240’s “warts and all,” its criticisms, complaints, and controversies—i.e., too heavy to lug about, why the Marines and Rangers had to do an end run around the procure-

ment system by shoehorning the M16 into the 21st century as the M4, etc.

Little did this cautious reviewer (whose only familiarity with a firing weapon occurred at the age of 13 when he shot himself in the foot with a friend’s BB gun) expect to become so immersed in machine gun miniature. Now, he can say unequivocally that no two back-to-back highly technical battle books were ever more unpretentious, more skillfully documented, yet so quietly riveting as “The M240 Machine Gun, From USGI M240 to the Ohio Ordnance M240-SLR” and “The Browning Automatic Rifle—From the 1918 to the 191843-SLR.”

Don DeNevi



*Author’s bio: Don DeNevi has written more than 30 books, among them “The West Coast Goes to War, 1941-1942”; “The Military Railway Service: America’s Soldier-Railroaders in WWII”; and “They Came to Destroy America: The FBI Goes to War Against Nazi Spies & Saboteurs Before and During World War II.” Don lives in Pebble Beach, Calif., where he writes book reviews for Leatherneck.*

**THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE TRIPOLI PIRATES: The Forgotten War That Changed American History. By Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger. Published by Sentinel. 256 pages. Stock #0143129430 \$15.30 MCA Members. \$17 Regular Price.**

In contemplating what actions to take or which strategy to implement in dealing with the pirates from Somalia who created havoc for shipping companies in the Indian Ocean, Gulf of Aden, and waters off the Horn of Africa in 2009, President Barack Obama may well have pondered, “What would Thomas Jefferson have done?”

As minister to France from 1785-89, Jefferson tried to form a European confederation to “compel the piratical states (Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Libya) to perpetual peace.” However, England and France both fell away from the venture. To gain protection for American shipping, Jefferson chose the virtue of self-reliance. “From what I learn from the temper of my countrymen and the tenaciousness of their money,” he wrote to Yale president Ezra Stiles in 1786, “... it will be more easy to raise ships and men to fight these pirates into reason, than money to bribe them.”

In this book, “Thomas Jefferson and the



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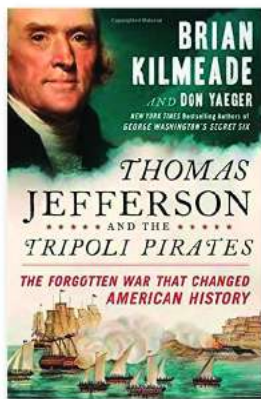
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Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War that Changed American History,” the authors, Brian Kilmeade and Don Yaeger, shed some new light on a vitally important episode that has been largely forgotten by most Americans.

For centuries, pirates off the northern coast of Africa attacked and plundered commercial ships plying the Mediterranean Sea, kidnapping passengers and crews. When the United States was a new country, the government had neither money nor a Navy for tribute, ransom, or protection. “Purchased” peace treaties (bribes) were easily broken by tyrannical Barbary state rulers. In 1801, the Bashaw (Pasha) of Tripoli demanded exorbitant payments that President Jefferson refused to pay.

Jefferson was determined to use force instead of suffering the humiliation and disrespect of repeated demands for money and gifts, as well as the frustration of not being able to prevent the capture and brutal enslavement of Americans. Ultimately, Jefferson sent ships from the newly established Navy, along with Marines, to protect U.S. ship-



ping and the unsteady American economy, leading the Bashaw to declare war against the United States. In this version of the first Tripolitan War, the authors focus more on the daring strategies and bold actions of envoys, commodores, and Marines who executed Jefferson’s policy than on Jefferson himself. Their writing serves to enliven the memory of the first U.S. offshore fight to oppose intimidation and lawlessness.

As for the legacy of the Marine Corps, along with the legends inspired by Lieutenant Presley O’Bannon who commanded the eight Marines who crossed the desert to assist in the attack on the city of Derne, Tripoli in 1805, there also is a theory that the Marine Corps was re-established by President Jefferson to combat the so-called “Islamic terrorists” of

yesteryear. While it is true that both the Navy and the Marine Corps were disbanded at the end of the Revolutionary War, they were re-established by the Naval Act of 1794. As for the reasons they were reconstituted, it was not due to the actions of the Barbary pirates. Instead, in 1797, a new conflict arose on the high seas—with

France interfering with a number of American merchant vessels. And on July 11, 1798, President John Adams signed legislation formally creating the U.S. Marine Corps to help deal with the French. After the fighting with France, the trouble with the Barbary pirates flared up again so Marines were deployed aboard ships in various operations against the pirates and the North African countries that sponsored them. So much for attempts aimed at reinventing history!

For those interested in a more Hollywood version of the story, there is a movie called “Tripoli: The First Marines.” Not totally accurate in many aspects, the movie nonetheless reflects the political current at the time it was produced (the early Cold War period). The film implies that since the United States cannot always trust other countries to remain loyal, policymakers should pursue a unilateral and aggressive foreign policy.

Fred C. Lash

*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.*







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## Remains of Tarawa Marines Recovered, Identified

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) recently announced that the remains of several U.S. Marines, unaccounted for since World War II, have been identified and returned to their families for burial.

The remains were recovered from Betio Island in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Recovery efforts began in June 2015 when an archaeological team from History Flight, Inc., located the remains.

The Marines were killed during the Battle of Tarawa in November 1943. Over several days of intense fighting on the atoll of Tarawa, approximately 1,000 Marines and Sailors were killed and more than 2,000 were wounded, but the Japanese were virtually annihilated.

Despite the heavy casualties, the battle was a huge victory for the U.S. because the Gilbert Islands provided the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet a platform from which to launch assaults on the Marshall and Caroline islands to advance their Central Pacific campaign against Japan.

U.S. servicemembers who died in the battle were buried in a number of battlefield cemeteries on Tarawa, and in 1946 and 1947, recovery operations were conducted. Many of the remains, however, were determined non-recoverable.

The Marines whose remains recently were identified are:

**Pvt Robert J. Carter**, 19, of Oklahoma City. He was assigned to Company G, 2d Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, Second Marine Division.

**Pvt Dale R. Geddes**, 21, of Grand Island, Neb. He was assigned to Co H, 2d Bn, 8th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

**Pvt Palmer S. Haraldson**, 31, of Lincoln, Neb. He was assigned of Co C, 1st Bn, 6th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

**PFC James B. Johnson**, 19, of Poughkeepsie, N.Y. He was assigned to Co K, 3d Bn, 8th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

**PFC Elmer L. Mathies Jr.**, 21, of Hereford, Texas. He was assigned to Headquarters Co, 2d Bn, 8th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

**PFC Charles E. Oetjen**, 18, of Blue Island, Ill. He was assigned to Co E, 2d Bn, 8th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

**PFC John F. Prince**, 19, of New York. He was assigned to Co F, 2d Bn, 8th Marines, 2dMarDiv.

Compiled from DPAA news releases

**Edwin B. Ball**, 92, of Portland, Ore. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after graduating from high school. He was with the 1stMarDiv on Guadalcanal, New Guinea and Peleliu.

**Taylor J. Barton**, 92, of Miles, Texas. He joined the Marine Corps in 1945 and was stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif. After leaving active duty, he served in the Marine Corps Reserve until the mid-1960s.

**James E. Basey**, 72, in Asheville, N.C. He served during the Vietnam War with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 163. He later owned and operated several sheet metal and steel fabrication businesses.

**Laurie H. Britain**, 90, of Lakeland, Fla. In 1943, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and saw action on Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa.

**Richard L. "Dick" Brown**, 90, of

Hummelstown, Pa. During WW II, he fought on Iwo Jima. He was a member of the Bob Smith Det. #784, Marine Corps League.

**LtCol Umphis "Lee" Brown**, 78, of Pine Knoll Shores, N.C. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1955, and was later selected to attend Officer Candidates School. He retired in 1994.

**Sgt Roland G. Carlson**, 84, of Tucson, Ariz. He served seven years in the Marine Corps and was a veteran of the Korean War. He was a police officer in Grand Rapids, Mich., for 37 years.

**Michael A. Carroll**, 68, of Burtonsville, Md. He served in the Marine Corps during the Vietnam War as a member of "Hotel" Co, 2d Bn, 26th Marines.

**Roy J. Charles**, 93, of Urbana, Ill. He was a Marine who served in the South Pacific during WW II. He saw action on

Roi-Namur, Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima.

**Gregory R. Cooley Sr.**, 69, of Princeton, Texas. In 1966, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and served for three years. He spent nine months in USS *America* (CV-66); later he was attached to the U.S. Navy Caribbean Ready Group.

**William T. Darr**, 69, of Canton, Ohio. He was a Vietnam veteran who received the Purple Heart.

**HMC Stephen C. DuBois**, 95, of Alamogordo, N.M. He was a Navy corpsman who enlisted in 1939 and survived the attack on Pearl Harbor. He later served in the South Pacific, including on Guadalcanal. During the Korean War, he was a corpsman with 1stMarDiv.

**Pete Ellas**, 93, of Utica, Mich. He was a Marine who served during WW II. His awards include the Purple Heart.

**LtCol Robert R. Elliott Jr.**, 91, of Interlaken, N.Y. In 1942 he enlisted in the Marine Corps and was transferred to the V-12 Program. In 1945, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and was stationed in China. When he was discharged at the end of WW II, he completed his college education. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean War. From 1952-65, he served in the Marine Corps Reserve.

**Robert W. "Buck" Estes Jr.**, 90, of Gordonsville, Va. He was a Marine who served in the South Pacific during WW II.

**William F. "Bill" Felts**, 92, of Clyde, Texas. He was a 30-year veteran of the Marine Corps who fought in WW II and the Korean War.

**Maj Robert P. "Bob" Gehrdes Sr.**, 83, of Huntsville, Ala. In 1950, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and served for 26 years, including during the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He was commissioned in 1969. After his retirement from the Marine Corps, he worked for 21 years for NASA in logistical support activity for the space shuttle program.

**PFC Conrad M. Giles**, 92, of Big Canoe, Ga. During WW II he served with the 3d Marine Raider Bn. He saw action on Guadalcanal and elsewhere in the South Pacific. After the war, he attended Birmingham Southern College. He had a career in sales and also was the owner of an advertising directory in Atlanta.

**Henry "Hank" Hendrickson**, 89, of Virocqua, Wis. He enlisted in the Marine Corps when he was 18. In 1945, he was on Guam and Saipan with the 1st Bn, 2d Marines. After the war, he worked as a

shoe salesman. In 1964, he bought the store, which he owned and operated as Henry's Shoes for 30 years.

**Col Gary C. Jones**, 71, of Mount Vernon, Mo. He was a Marine aviator who flew the CH-53 Sea Stallion in the Vietnam War. In 1973, he entered the MOARNG. After his retirement, he raised cattle and taught math at a local high school.

**Edward J. Kazimir**, 67, in Valhalla, N.Y. He was with F/2/26, 3dMarDiv during the Vietnam War. He was a member of the VFW and American Legion.

**BGen Byron V. Leary**, 100, of Marshfield, Mass. He was a Marine fighter pilot who flew in the South Pacific during WW II. After retiring from the Marine Corps, he worked as a lobsterman and was a school librarian for 17 years. His awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with five gold stars.

**Victor Lovich**, 96, in Suffield, Conn. He was a Marine who served in the South Pacific during WW II. He fought in battles on Guadalcanal and Peleliu. His awards include the Purple Heart.

He reenlisted during the Korean War and was stationed at MCB Quantico, Va., and in Newport, R.I.

**Capt Ruth T. Johnson Ryder**, 98, in Eagan Minn. She was a high school teacher

in Minnesota until WW II broke out. In 1943 she was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve. In August 1944, while she was the commanding officer of the Women's Reserve detachment at Camp Mathews, she was the first woman Marine to qualify both expert rifle and pistol. According to the *Marine Corps Chevron*, Aug. 26, 1944, "shooting for score alongside the men recruits, Lt Telander scored a percentage of 96 with a .45-cal. pistol . . . . With the M1 regulation rifle she scored 308 . . . ."

**CWO-3 John M. Stevens**, 53, in Marshalltown, Iowa. He was a Force Reconnaissance Marine. During his 22-year career, he qualified as a combatant diver, and earned gold parachute wings.

**Willie "Odie" Stevenson Sr.**, 70, of Rock Island, Ill. He was a Marine who served during the Vietnam War and was awarded several Purple Hearts. He later worked as a corrections officer.

**Brent Alan Thompson**, 43, of Corsicana, Texas. He was shot in the line of duty while working as a Dallas police officer. He was a veteran of the Marine Corps who also worked as a contractor in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**PFC Bill H. "Willie" Toledo**, 92, in Grants, N.M. He was a Navajo Code Talker with 3d Bn, Ninth Marines. During

WW II he served in the South Pacific and saw action on Bougainville, Guam and Iwo Jima while transmitting messages in the code which was based on Navajo language.

In an October 2012 *Leatherneck* article, Toledo said, "Through a barrage or an air attack or naval gunfire, you still have to get the message off. We were taught to ignore the world around us and focus on the message. We saved a lot of lives using the code."

After WW II, the Code Talkers had to keep silent about what they had done during the war. "I was told, 'When you go home, keep your mouth shut.' We couldn't let anyone know what we did in case [America] needed to use the code again. So we never talked about the war, and our families never asked questions," Toledo said.

The code was declassified in 1968.

"In Memoriam" is run on a space-available basis. Those wishing to submit items should include full name, age, location at time of death (city and state), last grade held, units served in, dates of service and, if possible, a local or national obituary. Allow at least two months for the notice to appear.



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**SOUND OFF**  
**[continued from page 9]**

USS *George Clymer* (APA-27) in 1961. That ship's name conjured up a long buried recollection of my own experience aboard that vessel known in 1950 as the "Greasy George."

On Oct. 8, 1950, I boarded the Greasy

George in Inchon Harbor. The fleet sailed for Wonsan on Oct. 15, with the assault scheduled for Oct. 20. However, "Murphy's Law" prevailed.

The North Koreans had extensively mined the harbor and its approaches making it impossible to land the Marines and other troops until the Navy swept the mines. This effort became a severe

problem as the Navy had practically no minesweepers remaining in the fleet (or at least in the Far East). So while the problem was being solved, the fleet sailed 12 hours north and 12 hours south each day for about 12 days—it became known as "Operation Yo-Yo."

The fleet had not planned for such an extensive time aboard ship for the troops and food supplies began to run low. Probably due to poor dietary conditions, dysentery and gastroenteritis swept the troop transport. I was one of hundreds who spent a lot of time in the heads. Finally, the troop transports began entering the harbor and unloading on Oct. 26. It was a dry landing because the city had already been taken by land. Adding insult to injury, Bob Hope's entertainment show had a large wooden sign installed on the beach stating, "Bob Hope Welcomes the U.S. Marines."

So Cpl Spilleth can take note—what goes around comes around; history repeats!

Sgt Joseph Poleo  
USMC, 1948-52  
Roanoke, Va.

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Donald Whitton, USMC, 1968-1971

Dragon” was referred to. One person said that Puff did not make its appearance until sometime in 1969 or thereabout. I told them I could give the exact time when Puff made its initial appearance. The date was Jan. 1, 1967.

Third Battalion, 26th Marines had moved to the location where Camp Evans was later located. Things were quiet for the first few days, and we could get some good sleep at night. We went into a mutual stand-down with the North Vietnamese over the holidays and thought all would stay quiet.

At about 2 a.m. on Jan. 1, 1967, our whole perimeter opened up firing all weapons. Both artillery batteries, 105 mm and 155 mm, began firing. We later learned that the North Vietnamese were moving toward us from the west with an estimated regiment of troops. We had a patrol out west of our perimeter, and they observed this unit moving in our direction. A request to fire on them was denied. The approval to fire was given by the commanding general, III Marine Amphibious Force.

Things finally settled down and we went into a stand-down for the night. Shortly afterward we were surprised to hear an airplane flying overhead. Then we were more surprised when we saw a line of

fire coming out of the sky accompanied by a devastating sound that turned out to be machine-gun fire. We were informed that it was a C-47 aircraft that was armed with a special machine gun mounted in the left side waist door.

The next day we were instructed to refrain from talking to any news media about the incident. That is when we learned about “Puff the Magic Dragon.” A search of the command chronology for 3d Battalion, 26th Marines during this period of time should be able to verify this account.

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

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](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org). Due to the heavy volume, we cannot answer every letter received. Do not send original photographs, as we cannot guarantee their return. All letters must be signed, and e-mails must contain complete names and postal mailing addresses. Anonymous letters will not be published.—Editor



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## Reunions

• **5thMarDiv Assn.**, Oct. 6-8, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Ivan Hammond, P.O. Box 2312, Texas City, TX 77592-2312, (409) 770-4249, sgthambone@verizon.net.

• **Marine Corps Engineer Assn.**, Oct. 17-19, Pala, Calif. Contact Maj Charlie Dismore, USMC (Ret), (512) 394-9333, www.marcorengasn.org.

• **West Coast Drill Instructor Assn. (SgtMaj Leland D. "Crow" Crawford Chapter)**, Sept. 15-18, San Diego, Calif. Contact Gregg Stoner, (619) 884-9047, greggstoner22@aol.com, or CWO-3 Chip Dykes, USMC (Ret), (760) 908-2322, www.westcoastdi.org.

• **Marine Corps Counterintelligence Assn.**, Sept. 8-11, Camp Lejeune, N.C. Contact Ralph "Buck" Wheaton, (304) 947-5060, buckmccia@frontier.com.

• **Marine Corps Cryptologic Assn.**, Sept. 6-10, San Diego, Calif. Contact Clifton Mitchell, (805) 482-1936, cmitch1\_1@msn.com.

• **7th Engineer Bn Vietnam Veterans' Assn.**, Sept. 22-25, San Diego, Calif. Contact Doug McMackin, (623) 466-0545, gunnymac@hotmail.com, or Jim Taranto, (518) 567-4267, tarantoj@gmail.com.

• **Early Vietnam Veterans**, Oct. 20-23, Washington, D.C. Contact Bill Pratt, 661

N. Big Oak Rd. N.W., Malta, OH 43758, (740) 962-2666, maag16-411@embarqmail.com, www.mlrsinc.com/evv.

• **Aviation Logistics Marines**, Oct. 6-9, Beaufort, S.C. Contact Don Davis, (321) 978-5147, greyegl@dec.rr.com, www.avlogmarines.org.

• **3d and 4th Defense Bns (Solomon Islands, WW II)**, Sept. 14-17, Billings, Mont. Contact Charles Buckley, (510) 589-5380, ceb39reunion@gmail.com, or Sharon Heideman, (512) 638-2075, sharon\_heideman@yahoo.com.

• **11th Motor Transport Bn (RVN, 1967-70)**, Oct. 6-9, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Mike "Large Al" Alford, (503) 680-6505, alfordmtd@frontier.com.

• **1/27 (1stMarDiv, OPCON, RVN, 1968)**, Sept. 19-22, Charleston, S.C. Contact Felix Salmeron, (469) 583-0191.

• **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. 6-10, San Diego, Calif. Contact Burrell Landes, 2610 W. Long Cir., Littleton, CO 80120, (303) 734-1458, bhanon@comcast.net.

• **3/5 (50th Anniversary of Operation Hastings, all companies)**, Sept. 22-25, Nashville, Tenn. Contact John Templeton, (870) 405-8103, jltemp44@yahoo.com.

• **3/5 (Battalion Radio Operators,**

**FACs and Pilots, RVN, 1966-68)**, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, Branson, Mo. Contact Lynwood Scott, (813) 685-2197, lynwoodvscott@hotmail.com.

• **3/11 (Battery Adjust)**, Sept. 14-18, New Orleans, La. Contact Doug Miller, (402) 540-9431, dmiller482@gmail.com.

• **A/1/8 (August 1994-July 2000)**, Oct. 21-22, Stafford, Va. Contact CWO-3 Jim Clark, (910) 381-1871, jimclark@strategiclog.com.

• **A/1/12 (RVN, 1965-70)**, Sept. 22-24, Southport, N.C. Contact David Dorsett, (910) 619-5020, dhdorsett@ec.rr.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)**, Sept. 22-25, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Bob Divine, (517) 227-3714, bwdivine@gmail.com, www.deltacompanyvietnammarines.com.

• **E/2/3 (RVN)**, Sept. 11-16, Boise, Idaho. Contact Bill Smith, 7201 Castle Dr., Dublin, CA 94568, (925) 997-8041, da190@aol.com.

• **G/2/5 (all eras)**, Sept. 28-Oct. 2, Cincinnati, Ohio. Contact Martin Steinbach, 7395 Kirby Dr., Burlington, KY 41005, (513) 623-9594, martinsteiny@aol.com.

• **H/2/26**, Sept. 10-16, 2017, Branson, Mo. Contact Bill Hancock, 2748 Moeller Dr., Hamilton, OH 45014, (513) 738-5446, hancockw@roadrunner.com.

• **L/3/9 (RVN, 1967-69)**, Sept. 8-10, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Dale McCoy, (919) 901-2981, reelmccoy@reagan.com.

• **W/1/12 (3dMarDiv)**, Sept. 21-25, San Diego, Calif. Contact J.P. Burrage, (704) 425-5771, vsunshine18@gmail.com.

• **1st Plt, I/3/1 (RVN, 1968-69)**, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Dick "Cpl Reb" Bienvenu, (636) 357-9620, dickbienvenu@yahoo.com.

• **2d Topographic Co (FMF)**, Oct. 16-20, Stafford, Va. Contact Jim Martin, (781) 572-7924, topotrooper@aol.com.

• **630th Military Police Co (RVN)**, Oct. 5-8, New Orleans, La. Contact Roger Merillat, rkmerillat@gmail.com, www.630thmilitarypolicecompanyvietnam.org.

• **"Bravo" Co, 7th Motor Transport Bn (RVN, all eras)**, Sept. 30-Oct. 3, Philadelphia, Pa. Contact Tim Weddington, (816) 808-2357, timweddington@comcast.net, or Walter Schley, (816) 377-9438, walterschley1966@aol.com.

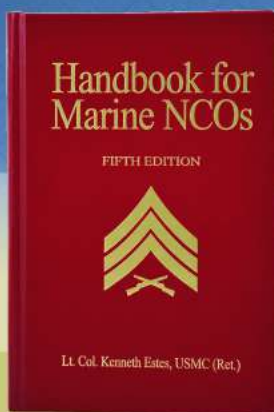
• **1st 8-Inch Howitzer Btry**, Sept. 7-11, San Diego, Calif. Contact Greg Ladesich,

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25382 Via de Anza, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677, (949) 249-3525, [GPL0812@att.net](mailto:GPL0812@att.net), [www.rpdsquared.com](http://www.rpdsquared.com).

- **3d 155 mm Gun Btry (SP) and 3d 175 mm Gun Btry (SP)**, Sept. 15-18, Charleston, S.C. Contact Ed Kirby, (978) 987-1920, [ed-kirby@comcast.net](mailto:ed-kirby@comcast.net).

- **Mortar Btry "Whiskey," 2/12 (RVN, 1965-69)**, Oct. 3-6, St. Augustine, Fla. Contact Henry Ortiz, 191 Regal Sunset Ave., Henderson, NV 80502, (949) 874-3636, [ortizwood@yahoo.com](mailto:ortizwood@yahoo.com).

- **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](mailto:jwiedhahn@aol.com), [www.miltours.com](http://www.miltours.com).

- **Yemassee Train Depot**, Oct. 14-15, Yemassee, S.C. Contact Roy Hughes, P.O. Box 265, Yemassee, SC 29945, (843) 589-3385.

- **Marines Stationed in Holy Loch, Scotland**, May 17-21, 2017, Dunoon, Scotland. Contact Doug Ebert, (307) 349-3468, [lochsailor9@charter.net](mailto:lochsailor9@charter.net), or Gerry Haight, (817) 602-0825.

- **American Embassy Saigon (RVN, pre-1975)**, Sept. 4-7, Portland, Ore. Contact MSgt Gus Tomuschat, USMC

(Ret), (804) 693-3007, [saigongunny@yahoo.com](mailto:saigongunny@yahoo.com), [www.saigonmac.com](http://www.saigonmac.com).

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

- **Marine Barracks Sasebo, Japan**, Oct. 17-21, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact 1stSgt McCarthy, (515) 274-9110, [coach430@aol.com](mailto:coach430@aol.com), or Ruben Chavira, [bngm@aol.com](mailto:bngm@aol.com).

- **TBS, Class 5-62**, Sept. 29-Oct. 2, Nashville, Tenn. Contact Denis W. Retoske, (714) 287-0706, [dwrlawyer@gmail.com](mailto:dwrlawyer@gmail.com), [tbsclass562@gmail.com](mailto:tbsclass562@gmail.com).

- **TBS, Class 1-66**, Oct. 2-5, Quantico, Va. Contact Ed Armento, (502) 228-6595, [evamento@aol.com](mailto:evamento@aol.com).

- **TBS, Co F, 6-79**, is planning a reunion. Contact LtCol Tom Conners, USMC (Ret), (919) 303-2697, (919) 418-5757, [tconners3@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto:martann843@gmail.com).

- **Plt 98, Parris Island, 1948**, is planning a reunion. Contact SSgt Jim Proulx, USMC (Ret), (904) 343-4850, [bertojoto1@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:jcroom47@aol.com).

- **Plt 245, San Diego, 1965**, is planning a reunion. Contact David S. Alvarez, (209) 735-2601, [srt8o06@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto:don814u@hotmail.com).

- **Plt 340, Parris Island, 1963**, is planning a reunion. Contact Garrett W. Silvia, (508) 992-7392, [gwsil@comcast.net](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:snorpel@yahoo.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](mailto:jrj430@yahoo.com).

- **Plt 2030, Parris Island, 1965-66**, is planning a reunion. Contact John E.

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Lyford, (518) 654-6073, reniejohn@roadrunner.com.

- **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 3002, San Diego, 1956**, Sept. 6-10, San Diego, Calif. Contact Jack Lahrman, (765) 427-8132, jdlahrman@mintel.net.

- **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. 5-8, Branson, Mo. Contact Jerry Gipe, 808 W. Walnut St., Waverly, MO 64096, jgipe@hotmail.com, or Joseph Mowry, josephmowry@att.net.

- **SATS/EAF, MAG-12 (Chu Lai, RVN)**, Nov. 7-10, Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Contact Paul Flatt, (801) 782-2468, pfflatt@msn.com.

- **Marine Air Control Squadrons (all squadrons)**, June 22-25, 2017, Quantico, Va. Contact Frank Walter, 3465 W. Loon Lake Rd., Angola, IN 46703, fwalter@frontier.com.

- **Marine Air Base Squadrons 43 and 49**, Sept. 17, Earleville, Md. Contact Col

Chuck McGarigle, USMC (Ret), 23 Greenwood Dr., Bordentown, NJ 08505, (609) 291-9617, mabsreunion@comcast.net.

- **HMM-165/VMM-165 (all hands/all eras)**, June 8-11, 2017, Washington, D.C. Contact Al Dickerson, (317) 462-0733, www.hmm165whiteknights.com.

- **HMM-265**, May 22-26, 2017, San Francisco, Calif. Contact George Cumpston, (704) 351-0193, george36691@aol.com, or Tim Bastyr, (770) 304-2290, tmb2sdl@numail.org.

#### Ships and Others

- **USS Canberra (CA-70/CAG-2, 1943-71)**, Oct. 12-16, Portland, Maine. Contact Ken Minick, P.O. Box 130, Belpre, OH 45714, (740) 423-8976, usscanberra@gmail.com.

- **USS Elokomin (AO-55)**, Sept. 22-25, Lisle, Ill. Contact Ron Finet, N6354 County Rd. H, Elkhorn, WI 53121, (262) 742-4269, finet@hotmail.com.

- **USS Hornet (CV-8/CV/CVA/CVS-12)**, Sept. 13-18, Portland, Ore. Contact Sandy Burket, P.O. Box 108, Roaring Spring, PA 16673, (814) 224-5063, horneteva@aol.com, www.usshornetassn.com.

- **USS Houston (CL-81) Assn.**, Oct. 19-23, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Donna Rogers, 3949 Little John Dr., York, PA 17408, (717) 792-9113.

- **USS John R. Craig (DD-885)**, Sept. 20-25, Nashville, Tenn. Contact Jerry Chwalek, 9307 Louisiana St., Livonia, MI 48185, (734) 525-1469, jermail@ameritech.net.

- **USS Ranger (CVA/CV-61)**, Sept. 28-Oct. 1, Charleston, S.C. Contact George Meoli, (203) 453-4279, uss.ranger@yahoo.com.

- **USS Saratoga (CV-3, CVA/CA-60)**, Oct. 19-23, Branson, Mo. Contact Sammy King, (270) 570-8494, ursupersara60@gmail.com.

#### Mail Call

- Anastasia Rief, (509) 412-5617, anastasiar08@gmail.com, to hear from anyone who served with **SSgt James G. WHEELER, USMCR**, who was a member of **I & I Staff, Co A, 4th CEB**. He lived in Massachusetts prior to 2004, when he relocated to Charleston, W.Va.

- Marine veteran Milton J. Beyer, 1107 Upton Ave., Schulenburg, TX 78956, (979) 743-3685, ellenbeyer@gmail.com, to hear from members of **"Mike" Co, 3/5**, who were stationed at **Camp Schwab, Okinawa, from February 1960 to February 1961**. Battalion commander was **LtCol Kenneth J. HOUGHTON**.

- Marine veteran Ralph "Gil" Gilbertsen, 901 Cannon Valley Dr. W., Apt. 327, Northfield, MN, 55057, (507) 321-0665, to hear from **J.P. REDMOND, L.A. POOLE III, David H. HUGEL, D.R. "Denny" CLARK**, and any other members of **Plt 185, Parris Island, 1960**. He would also like to hear from the **platoon DIs, SAWCHIK, PINGUET and LOWER**.

- Sgt Fred W. Unsworth, 1480 Nut Tree Ln., Sonoma, CA 95476, fredw292@comcast.net, to hear from members of **Plt 292, San Diego, 1956**.

- John M. Shea, 2141 Tucuman Ave., Pahump, NV 89048, ladyshea17@sbcglobal.net, to hear from members of **Plt 107, San Diego, 1953**.

- Marine veteran William Napier, namvetbill19441@gmail.com, to hear from or about **Navy corpsman Jim BYNAM of Long Beach, Calif.**, who served with **F/2/3, 1965**.

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



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\*National Safety Council's Injury Facts, 2013 Edition.

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Photo By: Cpl. Joshua Murray

# Saved Round

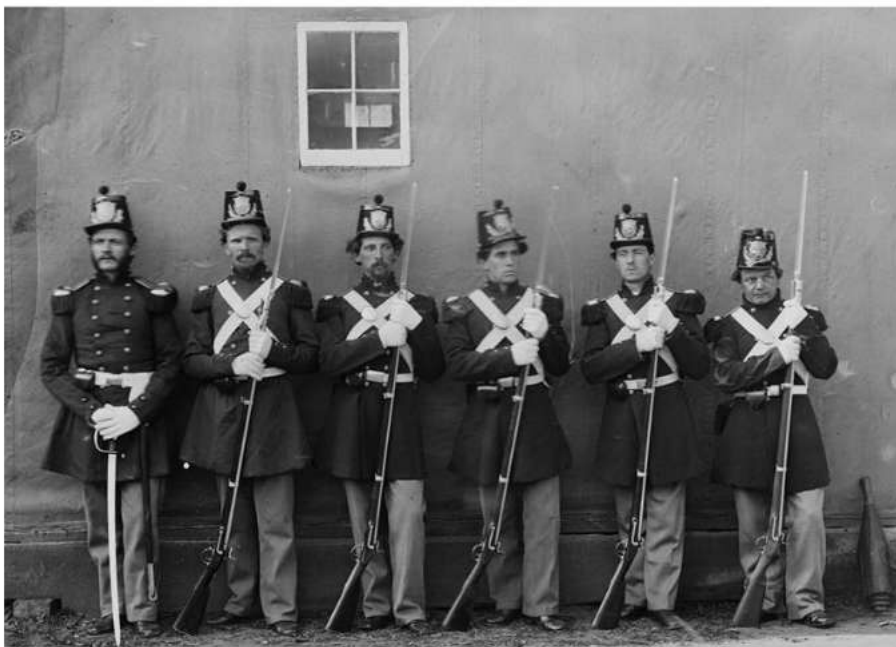
Compiled by Kelsey Ripa



**BECOMING THE BRAND**—In the early 1800s, the Marine Corps did not have a distinct emblem to distinguish themselves from the other branches of service. Numerous variations of emblems incorporated eagles or anchors as well as other elements like laurels and wreaths.

According to Dr. Frederick L. Briuer, author of "United States Marine Corps Emblems: 1804 to World War I," the emblem pictured at left is very different from any other Marine Corps emblem. It consists of a large shield, a wreath and a bugle with the letter "M" in the center. Worn as an ornament decorating dress caps of Marines from 1859-62, this particular emblem was recovered during a 1964 excavation of USS *Cairo*, which was sunk by Confederate soldiers in 1862.

This photo of the emblem is courtesy of Frederick L. Briuer, Ph.D., from his book "United States Marine Corps Emblems: 1804 to World War I." You can read the review of his book on page 58.



Marines at the Washington Navy Yard in 1864. They are wearing their dress uniforms, displaying the emblem pictured above on their dress caps, or "shakos."



A detailed illustration of the emblem on an enlisted Marine's shako. The emblem was worn both by officers and enlisted Marines. The type of material it was made from depended on the rank of the wearer.

