

Thanks to support provided by the Marine Corps Association Foundation in July 2018, Marines from 2/8 walked the beaches of Tarawa on the 75th anniversary of the battalion's participation in one of the Corps' bloodiest battles. SgtMaj Daniel Headrick, Sgt Aaron Mota and LtCol Daniel J. Gaskell stand with 2/8's colors on Red Beach 3 during their trip to Tarawa. (Photo by LCpl Timothy Hernandez, USMC)



Marine Corps Association Foundation Marks 10 Years of Standing By Marines, Providing Valuable Resources

By Col Timothy Mundy, USMC (Ret)

The commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Okinawa, Japan, asked for support from the Marine Corps Association Foundation (MCAF)—books for his unit's library. He wanted his Marines to read about the war plan for the conquest of the Pacific in World War II. The MCAF delivered—45 copies of "War Plan Orange" were sent to the CO to support his professional military education program.

In the current era of the "return of Great Power competition," it's easy to find pertinent lessons for future war in the annals of the past. And while the CO and his sergeant major may have hoped

that the book would inspire their junior Marines, noncommissioned officers, staff noncommissioned officers, and young officers to reflect on how the United States battled foes their equal during the 1940s in the Pacific, they could not have foreseen how much it would cause those Marines to think about the challenges they could face in the near future.

To a Marine Corps whose recent history was made in the somewhat ironically named arena of irregular warfare, where a bullet or improvised explosive device wounds or kills you just as effectively as in regular warfare, the thought of facing a peer competitor is somewhat novel.

What the commanding officer and sergeant major

Providing awards to deserving Marines throughout the Corps is one of the Foundation's programs in support of today's Marines. LtGen William M. Faulkner, USMC (Ret), second from right, assists LtGen Larry Nicholson, Commanding General, III MEF, second from left, in presenting the 2017 III MEF NCO of the Year award to Sgt Gabriela J. Williams. MajGen James Lukeman, left, and BGen Thomas D. Weidley, right, also were on hand at the February 2018 award presentation.



COURTESY OF III MEF



ABIGAIL WILSON

Training Command recently conducted a writing contest to encourage their Marines to study and write on the profession of arms. MCAF provided books, certificates and prize money to the winners. Col Tim Mundy, USMC (Ret), the Director of the Marine Corps Association Foundation, (left), and SgtMaj Kevin Bennett, USMC (Ret), second from left, assist Training Command's commanding general and sergeant major, BGen Calvin L. Worth, third from left, and SgtMaj David A. Wilson, second from right, in presenting the award for second place in the competition to LCpl Adhira Arunas as Col Ahmed T. Williamson, CO, OCS, third from left, and SgtMaj Lance Harrell look on.



ABIGAIL WILSON

Above: Providing guides for battlefield studies is one popular way in which MCAF supports units throughout the Corps. Marines from the Manpower Management Officer Assignment Branch, took advantage of MCAF's support and toured battlefields throughout the Fredericksburg, Va., area in May 2018.

Below: The Victor E. Johnson Uniform Award, provided to the enlisted candidate with the highest score in each OCS class, is one of the many awards MCAF presents each year to outstanding Marines at schools and training detachments. Candidate Justin Richard of OCC 223, pictured with his wife and sons, received the award which includes a gift certificate for the purchase of uniforms at The MARINE Shop.



RON LUNN



COURTESY OF 2ND MAW

Above: In addition to its numerous Corps-wide essay contests designed to encourage Marines to think critically and engage in professional discussion and writing, MCAF frequently supports the efforts of individual units to encourage their Marines to hone their reasoning skills through writing. While serving as the CG of 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing, MajGen Robert B. Hedelund conducted one such contest to assist in the professional development of his Marines in 2015.

discovered was that the young Marines of their unit, at all levels, immersed themselves in the education and challenge of professional military thought about complex problems. For the cost of a handful of books and the investment in time carved out of the unit's training schedule, Marines grappled with problems not faced in recent years and used their ingenuity to imagine possible solutions. These small investments created a group of thinkers.

Technology often gives a military advantage, but the true ingredient in victories is the creativity and ingenuity of the men and women wearing the uniform. These small investments, made possible by MCAF support, had air traffic control Marines figuring out ways to open Okinawa roadways for distributed aviation operations in the event airfields were destroyed by the enemy. Junior aviation fuel Marines could be found discussing their roles in vital asset protection and how to sustain aviation operations if fuel was interrupted.

With the expenditure of several hundred dollars—the cost of a set of books—these Marines have been



COURTESY OF HEADQUARTERS & SERVICE BATTALION, MCB QUANTICO

launched on a career-long journey of professional development. And whether their time in the Corps is four years or 30, they have learned the value of serious study of their profession because that's what this profession demands. Truly, the commanding officer had achieved a return on his investment and the investment of the Marine Corps Association Foundation.

The mission of the Marine Corps Association Foundation is to support Marines, around the Corps and across the globe, and it's not unusual for us to see a return on our investment similar to what we saw with the Marines at MCAS Futenma. I have been fortunate to be the Director of Operations for the Marine Corps Association Foundation for more than two years, and while I knew what the Foundation did for Marines from my own experiences throughout my career, today I have the privilege of seeing its remarkable impacts on a regular basis.

April 30, 2019, marks the 10th anniversary of the Foundation, which was created as the 501(c)(3) arm of the Marine Corps Association. For the past decade, the MCAF has had a positive influence on the professional development of Marines.

Every year, through our programs, MCAF affects nearly a third of the Marines on active duty. The unit library program ensures that Marines have access to books on the Commandant's Professional

In early 2018, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps Base Quantico conducted a Leadership and PME Writing Competition in commemoration of the Battle of Belleau Wood. MCAF helped send the winning team, made up of junior officers and enlisted Marines, to France for the June 2018 ceremony that marked the 100th anniversary of one of the Corps' touchstone battles.

Reading List by placing a "library" in their battalion or squadron. This reaches the largest volume of Marines every year, and its impact can be through Marines' personal reflections or through unit-led discussions and development.

Battlefield studies or staff rides, which many unit commanders and sergeants major use to get their junior leaders out walking the ground of previous military engagements, studying what was done in the past and applying those timeless lessons to the present, bring to life the importance of being a student of the profession of arms.

MCAF's excellence and writing awards programs recognize the individual performance of Marines who go above and beyond their peers while studying at Marine Corps schools or courses, in their military occupational specialties, and often through creative, skillful writing that is done in addition to their daily jobs. From honor graduates at recruit training receiving a "Chesty" Puller trophy all the way up to the top company grade



CPL MELANIE MARTINEZ-USMC

MCAF representatives retired SgtMaj Adam Terry and retired SgtMaj Kevin Bennett flank 2nd Marine Division's commanding general, MajGen David S. Furness, after assisting in the Division's professional development by providing copies of "Common Sense Training" to NCOs, SNCOs and officers throughout the Division. Command Master Chief Jody G. Fletcher, left, and Division Sergeant Major Alex M. Dobson, right, also were on hand when the MCAF representatives presented the books for use in unit libraries throughout the Division.

ground combat arms officer receiving a Leftwich Trophy, often from the Commandant himself, these programs make a difference to Marines, their units, and their families. And ultimately, they make a difference in the professionalism of our Corps.

Nearly a decade ago I was the commanding officer of the School of Infantry-East in Camp Lejeune, N.C. Graduation ceremonies for Marines at our courses there, whether at Marine Combat Training Battalion, Infantry Training Battalion, or the Advanced Infantry Training Battalion, had the Marines who were honor graduates receiving plaques and awards sponsored by the Marine Corps Association Foundation. Most family members in attendance, and even many Marines likely believed these awards came from the Marine Corps. But the funds that support these awards come from donors—many of them veteran and retired Marines and family members—who understand the importance of proper recognition when Marines excel. The Marine Corps' federally provided funds do not pay for awards like these, or for battle studies, or books in unit libraries. But all these things are essential to the development of military professionals.



Think of the impression it makes on young Marines to stand on the battlefields where their predecessors fought and beaches stormed by the Marines who came before them. Just in the time I've been with the Foundation, we've sponsored battalions taking their small unit leaders to Vietnam to see firsthand where their fellow Marines fought during the Vietnam War. We've had Marines walk the hallowed ground of Belleau Wood, France, where one of the Corps' touchstone battles was fought. In 2018, leaders from two battalions stood in the sand on Tarawa, where their predecessors fought, bled, and ultimately overcame a ferocious enemy in a battle described best as "utmost savagery." These experiences cannot be overstated.

Even when Marines visit battlefields where the Corps may not have history, the lessons are still immense. One unit commander described it best after he and his Marines had visited a Civil War battlefield when he wrote to us and said: "I watched the faces of my staff sergeants and gunnery sergeants as the 'lights came on' at different stops along our route as they realized the opportunities and decisions taken or lost by the leaders, and the

The CG of 3rd Marine Division, MajGen Craig Timberlake, presents the Division's Marine of the Year, Cpl Victor Rangel, with an NCO sword at the Ground Awards Dinner May 3, 2018, in Crystal City, Va., as a senior Marine from 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion proudly looks on. In addition to providing awards to honor graduates at both recruit depots and MOS-producing schools throughout Training and Education Command, MCAF helps recognize Marines and NCOs of the Year at major subordinate commands from Camp Lejeune to Okinawa.



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individual efforts of the men to take advantage or recover from those decisions. As a CO, this was one of my best days in Command ... this tour made my SNCOs better critical thinkers, increased the morale of my enlisted leaders, and made my squadron better.”

Critical and creative thinking is encouraged in today's military. But to be one of those “out of the box” thinkers requires an understanding of the profession of arms that is only obtained by dedicated professional development and study. Being informed by the lessons of the past and having a firm understanding of current capabilities allows the men and women of our Corps to envision solutions to future complex problems; to be those critical thinkers our nation must have. Retired Marine Corps General James Mattis said it best, “And I knew right away ... I didn't care how brave their boys were. I didn't care how many guns they had ... Based on all that reading the Marine Corps had required at each rank, I could see exactly how to take this enemy down.”

This is the type of impact the Marine Corps Association Foundation has had the last 10 years, and it's the type of return on investment we will keep making in the next 10 years and beyond.

Author's bio: Col Timothy S. Mundy, USMC (Ret) is the Director, Foundation Operations for the Marine Corps Association Foundation. A career infantry officer, he was fortunate to lead Marines both in peacetime and combat while serving in all three active Marine Divisions, has commanded at every level, and served in several key staff billets in Marine Corps and Joint organizations. He retired from active duty in January 2017.

Editor's note: To learn more about our Foundation and help support today's Marines and their professional development, please visit www.mca-marines.org/foundation.

Below: Marathon, Greece, was the location of another MCAF-sponsored battlefield study when 2/2 visited the iconic site. MCAF is proud to support the professional military development and education of Marines throughout the Corps, whether providing guest speakers, assisting in battlefield studies or establishing unit libraries.



COURTESY OF MAJOR DENNIS DUNBAR, USMC