

# GLOBE, ANCHOR- AND SADDLE!

Jim Blackton A **Leatherneck (pre-1998)**; **Quantico** Vol. 40, Iss. 7, (Jul 1957): 38-41,85.

A quick improvisation saved the day for the Horse Marines

Over the clash of sabers, the Sergeant yelled. "On Marinest Scuttle the Redcoats!"  
Wilmington, N.C. Nov. 6, 1783  
The Honble, John Adams Marine Commission Continental Congress Philadelphia,  
Penny.

To My Good Friend-Greetings.

I needs must dispatch this by courier, being myself yet unable to stand the rigors of such a long journey, due to the grievous wound suffered at the battle of Guilford's Courthouse. This scrivening is prompted by the unbelievable news that some of the Honble. Gentlemen of the Congress are seriously considering the abolishment of all our armed forces. True, we have finally won our independence-but are we to lose it again to the Dons, the French or through another war with England? This surely will happen do we pursue such a mad course. You, my friend, can put a stop to this. As Braintree of our Navy you have been in close touch with all things maritime during our war for freedom. Your staunch support of all Gen. Washington's demands upon the Congress for more ships-Sailors to man them-Marines to complement them-convinces me you cannot approve of this foolhardiness. My experiences as a Lieutenant of the Continental Marines might be of value to you in impressing upon the Honble. Gentlemen of the Congress the great need for continued maintenance of all our armed forces -especially the Marines. I doubt not that the Gentlemen will ask you why a Marine presumes to tell them what to do. I shall tell them why-from the beginning. You will recall that through most of 1776 and part of '77 I served with the Marine detachment aboard the Continental brig Lexington, Capt. John Barry commanding. After our successful engagement with H.M. sloop Edward near lower Delaware, you ordered us to the island of St. Eustatius in the West Indies to pick up a sorely needed cargo of powder and medical supplies. The mission was accomplished without incident except that during the run back from the island I was taken with severe attacks of the flux; caused, no doubt, by partaking of the inferior rum dispensed by the thieving tavernkeepers there. Part of our cargo was unloaded at Charleston, where Capt. Barry had me put ashore for medical treatment. The Lexington was to pick me up on her return but she never put back to Charleston. Instead, she was ordered by you to plague British shipping off the coast of England. News of her initial successes gratified me tremendously. The report of her eventual capture by H.M. cutter Alert was indeed sad news. This left me at Charleston without ship; but being yet quite ill and my weight down to ten stone I was not yet able to fight. By the time I had completely recovered the British blockade had become so effective you ordered all shipping to avoid Charleston and Savannah. What then, was there for me to do? I pondered this overmuch. I was a Marine with no ship. The blockade made it impossible for me to get one. I could not travel far overland without risk of capture by the British or by the hundreds of avowed Loyalists lurking

along the route to pounce on any Continental wayfarers for the bounty offered by Gen. Clinton. Still, I must fight. Finally a solution occurred to me. To build up my weight the surgeon had recommended a daily ration of mulled wine. I found it convenient to sup this at a tavern. It was there I met Capt. Forbes-Anderson, who commanded a troop of mounted militia under Maj. McCall. This force was soon to take the field against a British expedition which was moving down from the north to split the Colonies in twain. Held in Charleston like myself, were a number of Marines, Sailors and Privateersmen, stranded by lack of bottoms. Why not recruit as many of these as wished and form a company of Marines? Forbes-Anderson was most agreeable to my plan. Taking me to Gen. Lincoln he endorsed my plan heartily. Lincoln approved and consented that the company should be called Marines. He commissioned me to command them. The legality of such a commission was questionable as I admitted to you in a despatch in 1780. This was never delivered to you, the messenger having been captured. But that was not a time for quibbling about regulations. My recruitment went on apace. Soon I had thirty stout fellows. Eleven Marines and the balance Sailors and Privateersmen. I formed them into three squads of nine men, each squad under a Marine I had appointed sergeant. Uniforms and equipment were hard, to come by: but I insisted on at least the green coats and white cross webbings. I felt this would indicate beyond peradventure of a doubt that we were Marines! By divers ways the make-shift uniforms and equipment were acquired-nor did I enquire too closely as to the means. On a day in April, Capt. Forbes-Anderson rode up with a detail herding thirty odd sorry nags and informed me that the company was to be mounted. "God's Teeth," I roared, " 'Tis ill luck enough to be stranded on the beach. Why must we board these vicious creatures?" He informed me the entire force was to be mounted. It was the only way the required mobility for proper raiding of the British could be accomplished. I saw the wisdom of this. Wishing to fight rather than to remain inactive (and what Marine does not?) I signed the indent for the noisome beasts. Forbes-Anderson left a sergeant with us for instruction purposes. Then began a period of our training which, had the times not been so parlous, would have been ludicrous to the extreme. Marines and Sailors mounted! The hammerheaded equine selected by Forbes-Anderson to be my personal mount was an evil-tempered beast of some eighteen hands. His coat was black as his heart, and mottled with white spots like dried splotches of salt spray on the barrel of a twenty-four pounder. The sputtering fuses attached to the reins terrified the British. Once aboard this beast I found he did not know starboard from larboard; nor could I get him to answer the helm except to one point of the compass-that point being the one diametrically opposed to the direction in which I wished to steer. Our first mounted drill was very nearly our last. At the firing of a small cannon by parties unknown the beasts bolted to all points of the compass, trampling some of the populace who had gathered on the green to watch. However, in less than a month our troop of Horse Marines mastered the rudiments of cavalry drill and at the same time acquired the proper cavalry calluses. At last we joined Forbes-Anderson's troop and set out to harass the British. As you know, we could not stop them from taking Charleston but we were not captured as were the forces there under Gen. Lincoln. Thus we were free to join Col. Andrew Pickens' command-The South Carolina Mounted Militia. 1780 was a hard year for us. We had to forage off the country for victuals. Many of the populace in the area were Loyalists so we were compelled at times to "requisition" supplies, but according to Gen. "Washington's strict

orders we always left bills of exchange on the Congress for whatever we took. Powder and shot we obtained by raiding British supplies. After Gen. Gates' fiasco at Camden we were, in truth, in low spirits. Geil, Washington revived us by sending Gen. Nathaniel Greene to command all the Continental forces in the South. It was a happy choice. In a short time Greene co-ordinated the individual and haphazard efforts of Gens. Daniel Morgan and "Light Horse Harry" Lee; Col. Andrew Pickens and Lt. Col. Wm. Washington. Greene fused these groups into a cohesive striking force and we began to badger the lobsterbacks in earnest. Greene split our army in twain, giving half to Morgan and commanding the balance himself. Clinton had returned to New York leaving Cornwallis in command in the south. Our two forces continually chivvied Cornwallis' flanks. Fearful of being cut off from his supplies, which came by ship, Cornwallis ordered "Butcher" Tarleton to crush Morgan first, then Greene. Tarleton reinforced his Legion with three battalions of the best troops the King had in the colonies at the time and took after us. Morgan, with less than a thousand men had no wish for a pitched battle with a force three times his size. He withdrew skillfully and continued his Indian tactics. He finally met his match in Tarleton, who had also trained his Legion in Indian warfare. Tarleton pressed us sorely day and night. We continued retreating with Tarleton snapping at our heels, nor could we shake him off. Too many Loyalists in the region kept him informed as to our movements. Morgan at last decided to stand but needed time to assemble that part of his force which was out foraging and scouting. Sending hasty messages to Pickens and Wm. Washington to meet him at Cowpens he readied us for battle. Our glorious victory at Cowpens needs no further comment from me. Without Cowpens Cornwallis would not have retreated north and there might not have been a Yorktown. However, I must acquaint you with the valorous work of our Horse Marines on that memorable day so you may inform the Honble. Gentlemen of the Congress. The Carolina Militia and the Maryland Continentals broke up the initial British advance. Deprived of their officers by the sharpshooting of the Marylanders, the British milled about uncertainly. At exactly the right moment Lt. Col. Wm. Washington ordered his cavalry to charge. My Marines had procured some long powder fuses and secured them to our horses' reins in a dangling fashion. Lit just before the charge, the spluttering fuses struck terror into the hapless British as we rode them down. They thought we were carrying bombs! A breeze providentially lifted the pall of smoke overhanging the battlefield and we saw Tarleton's Legion thundering down upon us. Washington grasped the situation immediately. His trumpeter sounded "Reform" and "Right Wheel." John, my friend, you should have seen those Marines of mine execute the commands. As if they had been born to the saddle they regrouped and wheeled. This maneuver placed us directly in the path of Tarleton's Legion storming straight at us, sabers flashing. It was not exactly a comfortable place to be. I thought longingly of the quarterdeck of the Lexington! Washington then sounded "Left Wheel" and "Charge." Your trained mind can see at once what happened, friend John. Washington's incredible maneuver caught Tarleton napping and we smashed savagely into his flank. The carnage was terrible. Again Washington sounded "Reform" – "About" – "Charge!" and we smashed them again, what was left of them. Sabers rose and fell in bloody arcs as we cut and slashed our way through them. Above the din of clashing sabers and the screams of wounded men and horses I could hear my Sergeant Hanshaw bellowing "On Marines-Sink the Lobsterbacks!" and "On Marines – Scuttle the

Redcoats!" Never was I more proud of being a Marine than in that fury of clashing steel and thundering hooves. It was soon over. How many we killed or wounded cannot be reckoned due to the heat of battle and rapidity of maneuver; but it should prove to the Honble. Gentlemen of the Congress that Marines can adapt themselves to any type of warfare. You surely know, friend John, that first, last, and always my heart will remain with the Marines. I cannot now fight physically with them but I shall continue to fight for them with my quill until my hand is stilled by death. Who knows what great tribulations lie ahead of our newborn country? We will need all kinds of strong men and women to shape its destiny. We have a great continent to explore and develop. In the van must march those men whose particular qualities go to make up the true Marine. Neither Soldiers nor Sailors-but skilled in the arts of both. Fighting Men! Congress cannot disband the Marines. Instead, they must recruit more. They must train them to fight ashore and afloat, afoot and ahorse -Yea, they must learn to fight even from that fantastic contraption reported to me by a traveller newly returned from France. That contrivance which, they say, unbelievably ascends into the skies! The French call it a balloon. No. No, my dear friend, we cannot disband the Marines. We must expand them!

As Ever, your obt. ser. Jonathan Wright Lieutenant, Continental Marines.