

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

# Leatherneck

MARCH 2020

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A photograph of a Marine in flight gear, including a brown helmet with goggles and a dark visor. He is wearing a green flight jacket with several patches: a circular patch on the left shoulder that reads 'THE LEGION OF THE SOUTH FLARE CAPTAIN', a diamond-shaped patch with a red devil figure, and a rectangular patch that reads 'VMFA 232'. He is using a red-handled screwdriver to work on the fuselage of a white aircraft with red and blue stripes. The background is a clear blue sky with some clouds.

**Preflight Prep—**  
Aircraft Maintainers  
Keep 3rd MAW  
Mission Ready

**The Vietnam War:**  
Morale Was High  
On Dong Ha Mountain

**U.S. Ambitions in 1812**  
Led to Spilled Blood  
In East Florida

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# Contents

LEATHERNECK—MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

MARCH 2020  
VOL. 103, No. 3

## Features

**16 Misguided National Ambition and the Death of Captain John Williams** *By MSgt Jeff Dacus, USMCR (Ret)*  
On Jan. 25, 1811, Congress passed a resolution that authorized military action against East Florida. On March 13, 1812, local Patriots invaded northeastern Florida and seized the island of Amelia before moving on to St. Augustine where the Marine detachment was thrust into a volatile and diplomatically tricky situation.

**24 Three Days—Five Miles: A Victory on New Britain** *By Sgt Asa Bordages, USMC* In this article from the *Leatherneck* archives, Marines and Japanese fought their way up the trail from Volupai to the Talasea airdrome on New Britain. The fight for control of the ridge would determine the outcome of the battle.

**36 “Fix, Fly, Fight”:** **During Time of Transition, VMFA-232 Maintainers Keep F/A-18 Mission Ready** *By Sara W. Bock*  
Soon to be replaced Corps-wide by the F-35, the F/A-18 Hornet is an aging yet essential airframe that couldn’t continue to fly without the hard work of the Marines tasked with its maintenance. For the “Red Devils” of 3rd MAW, training is continuous, and they are proud to be the “first to fight, last to leave.”

**44 In the Fight at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan** *By Dick Camp*  
In the pre-dawn hours of March 1, 2019, Taliban fighters gained entry to Shorab Air Base, formerly known as Camp Bastion, only to be met by reservists from Co G, 2nd Bn, 25th Marines.

**54 Dong Ha Mountain** *By MSgt Tom Bartlett, USMC*  
This article from the *Leatherneck* archives features a group of Marines from 3/4 who provided security on Dong Ha Mountain during the monsoon rains as they also battled boredom while finding a lasting brotherhood.



## Departments

- |                                    |                             |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>2</b> Sound Off                 | <b>52</b> Books Reviewed    |
| <b>10</b> In Every Clime and Place | <b>60</b> Corps Connections |
| <b>22</b> Leatherneck Laffs        | <b>62</b> Passing the Word  |
| <b>30</b> Sea Stories              | <b>64</b> In Memoriam       |
| <b>32</b> We—the Marines           | <b>70</b> Reader Assistance |
| <b>35</b> Crazy Caption            | <b>72</b> Saved Round       |

**COVER:** Cpl Cole Moore, a power line mechanic with VMFA-232, secures storage on an F/A-18C Hornet at JASDF Hyakuri Air Base, Japan, July 24, 2017. See “Fix, Fly, Fight: During Time of Transition, VMFA-232 Maintainers Keep F/A-18 Mission Ready” on page 36. Photo by LCpl Mason Roy, 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've been telling people for the last 54 years that I spent my 18th birthday in Parris Island, S.C., and I spent my 21st birthday in a bunker in Vietnam. I served in 3rd Amtrac Battalion, 1st Marine Division, 1967, and in Tet 1968 and am a 100 percent disabled Vietnam veteran. When I graduated from boot camp, my mother gave me a subscription to *Leatherneck*. That went on for several years until my discharge in 1970.

Many years ago *Leatherneck* had a section in the back of the magazine titled, "Gyrene Gyngles." Recently I was digging through some old photo albums and I found this poem. I always found this one to be particularly moving and certainly true.

### Last Night on Parris Island

"The time has come," the gunny said,  
"To speak to you of the Corps,  
Of the name you bear,  
Of the emblem you wear,  
And the men who wore it before."

The DI spoke—directly it seemed—  
To each of the young recruits,  
On this night soon to blend,  
With the sun that would end,  
Recruit training for 70 boots.

As the Gunny's voice grew mellow,  
His campaign cover pulled low  
Did little to hide,  
The feeling of pride,  
Which tonight he could finally show.

"Three hard months are over," he said,  
"Four long years begun,  
And should you decide on 16 more,  
Or go the full 30 in this man's Corps,  
Be proudest of what you've just done.

"It isn't just boot camp you've finished,  
Not just a DI you faced,  
You've faced yourself through all of  
these days,  
You've conquered yourself  
in many more ways,  
Than you comprehend tonight.

"For here on the island

you could not run,  
Nor hide nor turn away,  
So you merely did what you had to do,  
You took the worst  
we could throw at you,  
And came back ready for more.

"So remember these weeks,  
allow them to jell,  
They will bear you up  
in the jaws of hell.  
Remember that your nerve,  
your brain, each sinew,  
Everything that the Lord put in you,  
Can serve you better than merely well.

"They will serve you longer  
than you can foretell,  
If you'll only hold  
when things get tough,  
Hang on beyond that point of enough!  
At the end you'll find  
that it wasn't that rough,  
And find yourself a little bit stronger.

" 'Cause the Corps is men,  
Just a little bit stronger,  
Who hang in there  
that extra time longer;  
There lies the difference—  
there though unseen,  
Between everyone else and you—  
a Marine."

The Gunny had said,  
"Goodbye" in his way,  
To each of his young recruits,  
On this night soon to blend  
With the sun that would end  
Recruit training for 70 boots.  
Lionel L. Fisher

Over decades I've used lines from this gyngle to motivate and compliment many folks whose paths I've crossed. I used "Be proudest of what you've just done," on Dec. 14, 2019, when one of my grandsons graduated with an engineering degree from the University of Central Florida. When my daughter was going through Army basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., I used "Remember these weeks," stanza to motivate her as she struggled with the foot problems. It has served me very well over the past 50-plus years. Perhaps one of our readers can find the same motivations for themselves or someone else in these words.

I am a life member of the Disabled American Veterans, the Beaufort, S.C.,

chapter which frequently sets a table at the entrance to the Beaufort Golden Corral restaurant on graduation day. I would stop a new graduate as he or she approached the door loudly saying, "Marine," and they would immediately turn and I would shake their hand and use the line, "Be proudest of what you've just done," with them. Naturally they would proudly smile but the most obvious pride and smiles came from the family members. I'll never forget those encounters.

SSgt Richard C. Klawe  
USMC, 1964-1970  
Port Saint Lucie, Fla.

## The Needs of the Military Dictate Your Duty Station

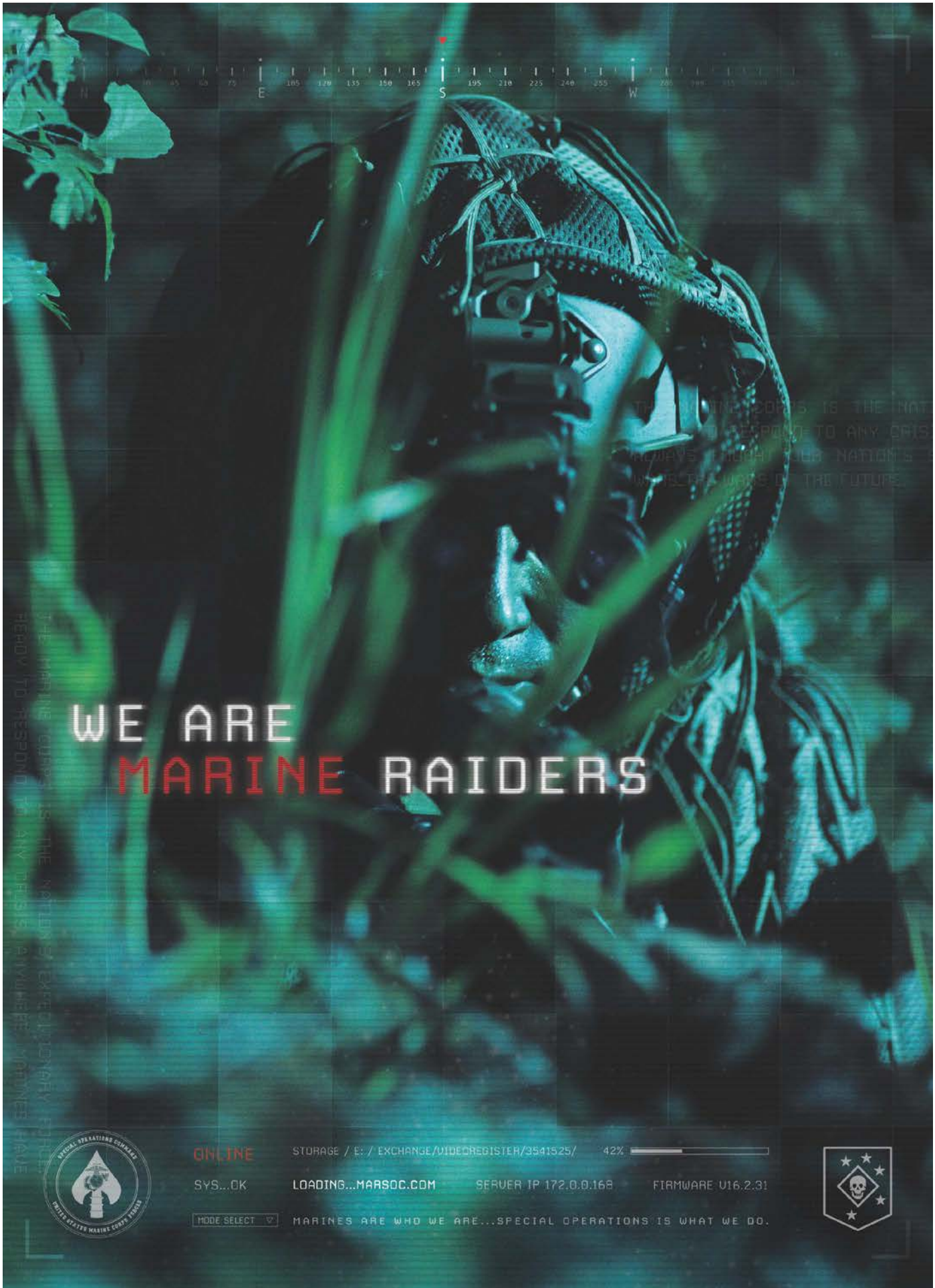
This is in response to the letter, "Why I Downplay Being a Marine," in the December 2019 issue by Corporal Frank E. Williams. As a Sailor who spent 4 1/2 years in the Navy, I have to add another view on active duty time in our military. Last time I checked, all U.S. Marines must complete boot camp to become a U.S. Marine. [Editor's note: officers must complete Officer Candidates School or graduate from the United States Naval Academy.] The roads are littered with young men or women who did not cut the mustard and did not graduate from boot camp. Same thing in the Navy. As a six-month active duty involuntary extension in Yankee Station off the Vietnam coastline and in the Tonkin Gulf in 1965, I learned the most important fact of serving our nation. The needs of the service dictate your duty station.

In September 1965, I pictured myself flying on a plane out of the Philippines or Yokohama, Japan, to the United States before my separation date. Uncle Sam needed me at that time, and 32nd Street Naval Station in San Diego would have to wait.

I was rewarded with a seven-day leave in Hong Kong in November 1965, when our ship got R&R time. As a dutiful Sailor who was eager to separate from active duty, I continued my duties and served as I was trained. Wherever one serves is dedicated by your MOS (military occupational specialty) and needs of the service first.

One should always remember there are a lot of parts and gear in the military and one should be extremely proud to have contributed and worn the uniform. As a Sailor, I am proud of all U.S. Marines,





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Army Soldiers, Coast Guard, Air Force and the agencies that protect our American form of life. Remember, the homeland is what we leave our kids and relatives. The United States military helps to keep it.

John Sanchez  
USN, 1961-1966  
Hanford, Calif.

## Everly Brothers Platoon

Does *Leatherneck* or any of your readers know what platoon the Everly Brothers were in? I was in Plt 162 at MCRD San Diego in September 1961.

Dennis F. Byrne  
El Dorado Hills, Calif.

## Korea 1968

This letter is in response to Robert Chicca's letter in the December 2019 issue as to what was going on Jan. 23, 1968, with the capture of USS *Pueblo* (AGE-2).

While stationed at Camp Lejeune with F/2/6, I had exactly eight days to go until my discharge on Jan. 31, 1968. As usual, rumors ran wild throughout the base; they're loading ammunition on trucks, cold-weather gear will be issued and we're going to Korea. With eight days to go, I had no problem with that. Being a Vietnam veteran with "Delta," 1/5, my position was, "They took our people, let's go get them!"

I knew it was cold in Korea. One private just out of boot camp did not. He asked our platoon sergeant, "Is it cold in Korea?" to which the gungy old salt replied, "Marine, it gets so cold in Korea, your words freeze in mid-air and you can't communicate until spring."

Jon Johnson  
Sidney, Ohio

## Unique Belt Buckle

I noticed in the November 2019 issue of *Leatherneck*, a letter asking for information on a belt buckle and whether it was regulation or not. I cannot answer that question but have included a photo of a very similar belt buckle, which was given

to me by a Marine friend who found it at an estate sale. There may be more than a few of these around.

Chris Tibbs  
Houston, Texas

## True Giants of the Corps

I am a new subscriber to *Leatherneck* and just received the December issue—well-done bringing pride to our Corps!

In the Sound Off section, I read reviews of the August article, "Saviors of the Corps: Generals Louis H. Wilson Jr. and Robert H. Barrow," by Second Lieutenant Rykar Lewis, USMC. From 1970 to 1971 in Okinawa, I served concurrently in G3, 3rdMarDiv under Gen Wilson and as Foreign Claims Commissioner, MCB Camp Butler for Gen Barrow. Both generals were ultimate professionals, true gentlemen and giants of the Corps. It was an honor and privilege to serve under them.

LtCol Dick Merritt, USMC (Ret)  
Basalt, Colo.

## Arizona Museum Houses Historical Aircrafts

I really enjoyed reading, "America's Air Power Reservoir: Home to Out-of-Service Marine Corps Aircraft, Arizona Desert Facility is More than Just a Boneyard," by Sara W. Bock, in the December 2019 issue as I have a personal connection to the place. While living in the Tucson area, I was a docent at the adjacent Pima Air and Space Museum doing walking tours and hangar sitting for about 10 years. It was a volunteer job I really enjoyed as we met visitors from all over the world.

The museum didn't offer tours of the Boneyard on weekends or federal holidays as the facility was shut down, but we docents would advise visitors who wanted to view the stored aircraft on those days to drive down the public street which went through the facility to at least get an outside view.

Our museum was the largest private aircraft museum west of the Mississippi



**This belt buckle was purchased at an estate sale by a friend of a *Leatherneck* reader.**

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and boasted a number of historical aircraft including the plane used by President Lyndon Johnson as Air Force One, a B-29 which flew numerous missions over Japan during World War II, and a huge B-36 which couldn't be missed in the yard because of its size. We also have a museum within the museum which housed a B-17 honoring the 8th Air Force that flew out of Britain during World War II.

The aircraft I most loved is an F4U Corsair with Marine Corps markings since the "U-bird" was the first aircraft I worked on and served with during my time in a squadron in Korea as part of my nearly 45-year career in aviation.

Another part of the museum is the Titan Missile Museum about 20 miles down the road. At that museum, one dons a hard hat to go down into the silo and control center, a great experience.

I would advise anyone visiting Tucson to visit both of the museums and don't forget to visit the Boneyard as one will be really impressed.

GySgt Paul T. Kuras, USMC (Ret)  
San Antonio, Texas

### Heading Home

Eleven Marines from Electronics Maintenance Co, 3rd FSR in Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan, were all trained in



COURTESY OF CPL PHIL MASON

**Marines from Electronics Maintenance Co, 3rd FSR are heading home from Camp Courtney, Okinawa, Japan, in the summer of 1961.**

electronic repair of either ground radio, radar or radio relay. Back then it was all tubes, no transistors. We had been working 12-on-12-off shifts since I got back from Fuji, Japan, in April 1961. At the time, single side band radio (transistors)

were being introduced to our staff non-commissioned officers. When I arrived in Okinawa, I was a single replacement to the company. I always thought some Marines were being returned home to be retrained in repairing the new single side

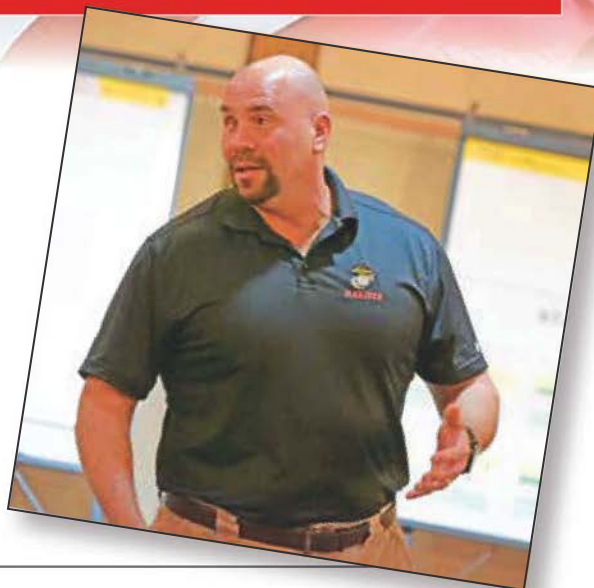
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band radios. I was short but was offered reenlistment for cryptograph repair and embassy duty but I returned to Camp Lejeune and was discharged.

Cpl Phil Mason  
Marshfield, Mass.

### Musician is Proud of Heritage

I thoroughly enjoy *Leatherneck* magazine and you do a great job of putting together an interesting and informative magazine. I would like to point out one small addition to one of the articles in the October 2019 issue which would, in my opinion, make a difference to the article.

The article "Every Marine Has a Story to Tell: For 100 Years, the USMC History Division Has Been Documenting the Corps' History for Future Generations of Marines," really caught my eye. I personally knew Corporal Martin E. Eichman and was fortunate enough to interview him before he passed away. True, he became a member of Company H, 2d Battalion, 4th Marines, but before that, he was a Field Music with the 4th Marine Regiment Band in China. The band was folded into Company H, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines as machine gunners, and from what I have read, did their job admirably as Marines, nothing less would ever be expected.

After the war, Martin stayed in the band field, became a drum major with the Department of the Pacific Marine Band and later applied for warrant officer. He was accepted and became the band officer of the 2ndMarDiv Band in the early 1950s. He later moved to the supply field and retired as a chief warrant officer 2 in 1959. He donated a Japanese trumpet, which he used in POW camp shows, when allowed, to the Marine Corps History Division.

I know this is a small item, but as a Marine musician for 26 1/2 years, I am very proud of our heritage. Keep up the great work with this wonderful magazine.

Chris Debow  
Leesburg, Fla.

### August 1942 *Leatherneck* Has Historical Value

I have an issue of *The Leatherneck* dated August 1942. Today I once again read through it.

I was in the Marine Corps in the 1980s and the sheer historical value of this magazine to me personally kept me from even telling people I have it, to avoid the temptation to sell it. After watching the miniseries, "The Pacific," it really drives home the importance of *The Leatherneck* magazine for the way it brought the human

[continued on page 66]

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MSgt Marcel Depersig  
Paul Dimitruk  
LtCol William Disher  
William Doyle  
Robert Dunphy  
Arthur Duquette  
Maj Andrew Eckert  
Peter Eschenbach  
Col Andrew Finlayson  
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LtCol Kerry Gordon  
Tom Goris  
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MSgt W. Hall  
SgtMaj Duane Hauer  
Col Walter Havenstein  
CWOS Charles Heal  
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Tom Hurt  
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T. Kidd  
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# In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

## OKINAWA, JAPAN

### Honing Lethality: MEU Exercise Sharpens Amphibious Capabilities

During December 2019, components of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit planned and executed full mission profiles in and around Okinawa, Japan, during MEU Exercise (MEUEX), a two-week evolution that prepared the Marine air-ground task force for amphibious operations launched from naval vessels.

The exercise is designed to simulate missions that the MEU could be tasked with at any moment by the geographic combatant commander and to improve the unit's lethality and readiness. The missions included small boat raids, in which a Marine amphibious force employed combat rubber raid craft to clandestinely insert on shoreline objectives, and company-sized expeditionary advanced airfield seizures using a vertical-assault force in MV-22B Osprey tiltrotor aircraft and CH-53E Super Stallion helicopters. The



LCPL ANDREW BRAY, USMC

**"Alpha" Co Marines, Battalion Landing Team, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, 31st MEU conduct close-quarters training during MEUEX at the Central Training Area, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 9, 2019.**

airfield seizures were conducted prior to the establishment of forward arming and refueling points for follow-on operations.

Throughout the scenario, the commanding officer and staff of the 31st MEU convened crisis action teams to assess the dynamic situation, and problem frame and "war-game" various courses of action. Mission commanders planned and briefed the mission sets to achieve the overall commander's intent.

This rapid response planning process, which is designed to take six hours from start to finish, is crucial in planning, executing and accomplishing the mission. By launching missions in and around Okinawa and simulating ship-to-shore movements, MEUEX prepared the MAGTF for planning and integration with naval partners.

Marines and Sailors with the 31st MEU regularly embark aboard the ships of Amphibious Squadron (PHIBRON) 11, forward-based in Sasebo, Japan, for de-



**During a simulated raid, Marines with Alpha Co, BLT 1/5, 31st MEU close with an enemy machine-gun position at the Central Training Area, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 11, 2019.**

LCPL ANDREW BRAY, USMC



**Marines with “Bravo” Company, BLT 1/5, 31st MEU, provide security during a simulated airfield seizure at le Shima Training Facility, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 9, 2019.**

ployments and at-sea periods. The MEU will continue to focus on providing an area presence throughout the Indo-Pacific region and conducting training with allied and partner nations’ militaries in order to enhance security, support freedom of navigation and serve as an expeditionary crisis response force.

According to Colonel Robert Brodie, the commanding officer of the 31st MEU, MEUEX is key to maintaining a constant state of combat readiness.

“We are continuously ready as a globally deployable unit prepared for crisis, and the MEU Exercise sharpens our lethal edge,” said Brodie. “The exercise develops leaders at all levels especially focused on small-unit leaders. It prepares them to take action with aggressive initiative in decentralized execution within centralized commander’s intent. Completing MEUEX, the 31st MEU is ready to address crises around the globe and prepared to fight our enemies or help those in need.”

LCpl Kolby Leger, USMC



SGT AUDREY RAMPTON, USMC

**Below: Marines with “Charlie” Co, BLT 1/5, 31st MEU move into position to begin a simulated beach raid at Kin Blue, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 17, 2019. Rehearsing beach landings during MEUEX helped components of the 31st MEU prepare for their upcoming deployment in the Indo-Pacific region.**



LCPL ANDREW BRAY, USMC



### Marines Rapidly Deploy, Reinforce U.S. Embassy

After violent protests erupted in Iraq's capital city of Baghdad, spurring an attack on the U.S. Embassy, Dec. 31, 2019, the Marine Corps deployed a quick reaction force in response. A detachment of approximately 100 Marines with Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force–Crisis Response–Central Command departed Kuwait within hours to reinforce the embassy compound and provide additional protection. SPMAGTF–CR–CC remains prepared to deploy aviation, ground and logistics forces forward at a moment's notice.



SGT KYLE TALBOT, USMC

**Above: Marines with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, assigned to SPMAGTF–CR–CC, load a KC-130J Super Hercules to reinforce the Baghdad Embassy Compound in Iraq, Dec. 31, 2019.**



SGT KYLE TALBOT, USMC

**Left: At the Baghdad Embassy Compound in Iraq, Marines with 2/7, SPMAGTF–CR–CC pass along sandbags to strengthen a security post, Jan. 4.**





SGT KYLE TALBOT, USMC

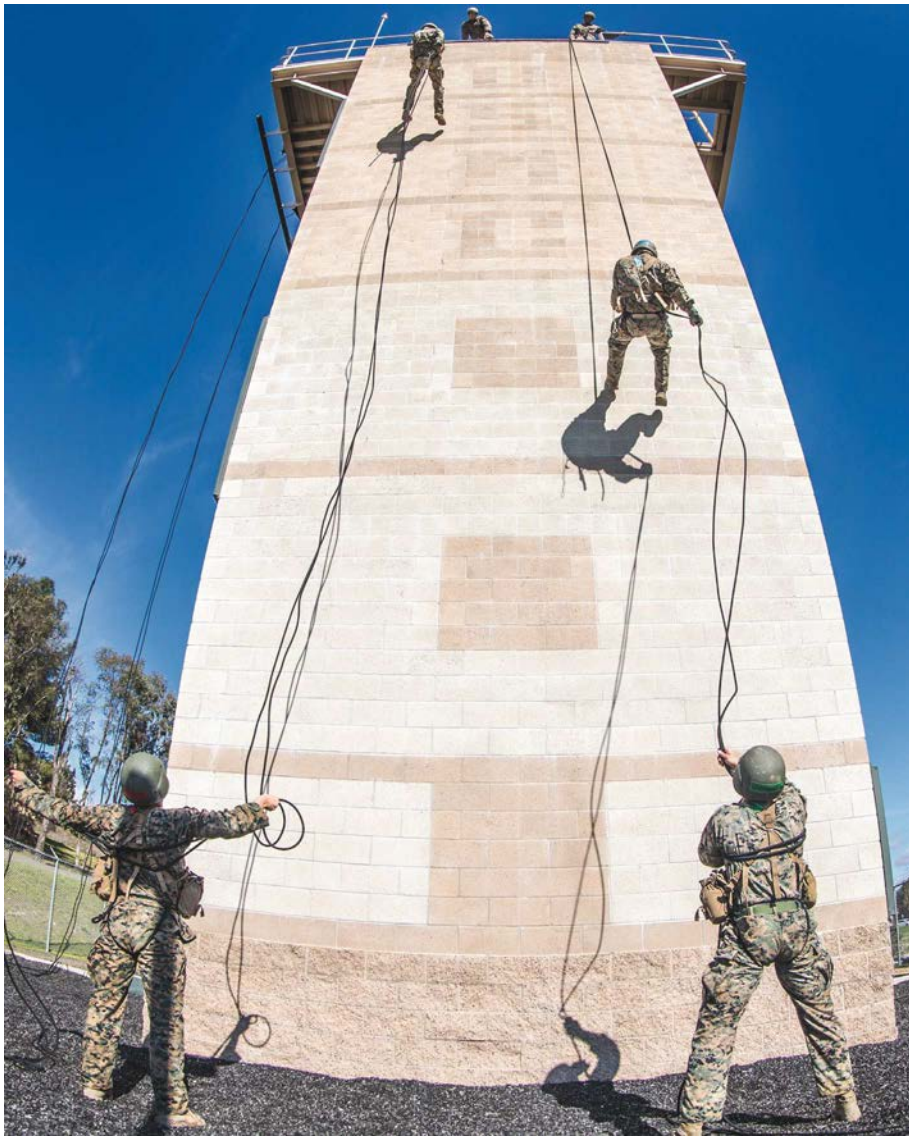


SGT KYLE TALBOT, USMC

**Above: Molotov cocktails thrown by protestors illuminate the walls within the Baghdad Embassy Compound in Iraq, Dec. 31, 2019. A detachment of Marines with SPMAGTF-CR-CC rapidly deployed to help reinforce the embassy as protests escalated.**

**Left: SPMAGTF-CR-CC Marines with 2/7 reinforce the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, Jan. 2.**





LCPL ALISON DOSTIE, USMC

**Left: During BRC 2-20, Marines conduct helicopter rope suspension techniques training at the 13 Area rappel tower on MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 22. The training includes classes and practical application of fast-roping, rappelling, belaying and special patrol insertion/extraction rigging from various aircraft.**

special patrol insertion/extraction rigging, each with their own purpose, depending on mission requirements.

Rappelling has a static rope, tied into a system within the aircraft, then strung out of the back. From there, Marines use a harness and a carabiner to slide down the rope out of the helicopter. When fast roping, Marines use a large rope hooked to the helicopter with a carabiner, but no harness. Using their hands, knees or feet, Marines slide down the rope in a timely manner.

Special patrol insertion/extraction rigging is a method used to place or remove a team or unit in an area that can't be accessed by another type of vehicle. Marines will hang from a rope beneath the helicopter as it flies into or away from the insertion point.

"This is one of the tasks that we have to hit as part of the BRC curriculum in order to become a basically trained reconnaissance Marine," said Captain Matthew Witcofsky, a student with BRC Course 2-20. "The majority of the class will use this in the fleet."

All the training requirements within BRC are the building blocks for additional training and skills the Marines and Sailors will learn later in the course or down the road in their military career. The training is graded on a pass or fail basis because the skills are added to in the future. If they don't pass the first time, they will remediate during the training to be able to successfully conduct the needed operations.

"Everything with conducting HRST operations is very technical," said SSgt Portugal. "If you are afraid of heights, we have to help those students."

Every instructor is responsible for the safety of the students. Once at the top of the tower, the instructors will take the extra time to walk the students through the expected steps again to ensure they understand what they are about to do. The students are expected to understand the task at hand or ask questions if they are unsure in order to keep everyone safe. Students who are afraid of heights are given every tool to ensure that even they can rappel safely.

"This is a challenge and an opportunity to lead," said Witcofsky.

LCpl Alison Dostie, USMC

[www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck](http://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck)

### **CAMP PENDLETON, CALIF. During Basic Recon Course, Helicopter Rope Suspension Techniques are Key**

Marines with Basic Reconnaissance Course 2-20, Reconnaissance Training Company, Advanced Infantry Training Battalion, School of Infantry-West, conducted helicopter rope suspension techniques training at the 13 Area rappel tower on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 22.

Prior to conducting this type of training, the Marines and Sailors participating in the course completed multiple classes to piece together skills needed to execute the training safely.

"Helicopter rope suspension technique training is what [HRST] stands for," said Staff Sergeant John Portugal, the primary HRST master for Reconnaissance Training Co. "It is where you conduct helo-borne operations with a small team or unit."

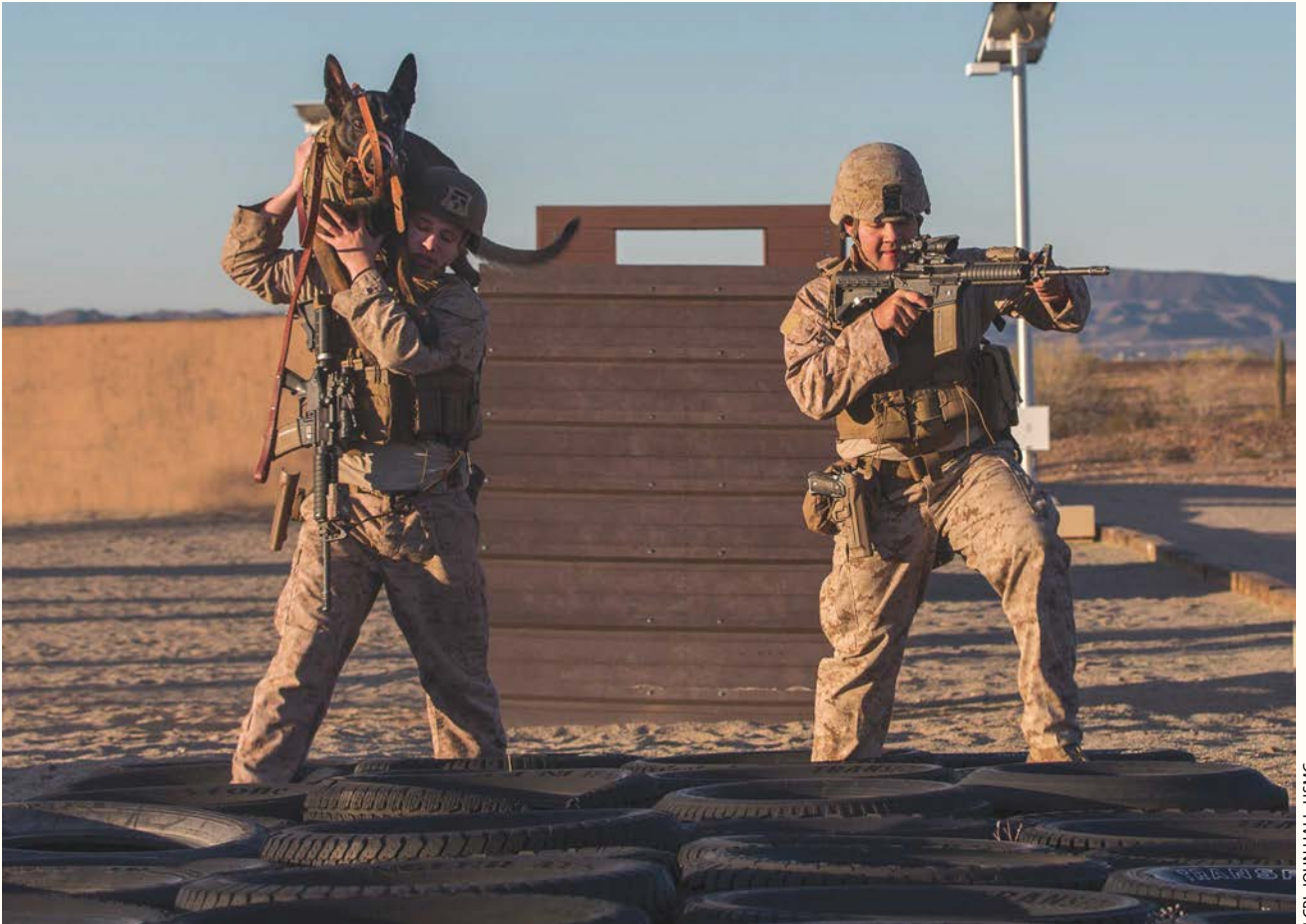
There are three types of techniques used in this training: rappelling, fast roping and



LCPL ALISON DOSTIE, USMC

**A Marine attending BRC 2-20 rappels down a rope during helicopter rope suspension techniques training at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 22.**





LCPL JOHN HALL, USMC

**Sgt Ian Kozlik, left, and his military working dog Patriot, currently assigned to the MWD Team Deployment Training Course, work through an obstacle course at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground in Arizona, Jan. 8.**



LCPL JOHN HALL, USMC

### **Military Working Dogs, Handlers Test Their Bond**

Military Working Dog (MWD) handlers from all three Marine Expeditionary Forces advanced their dog team capabilities during the three-week MWD Team Deployment Training Course at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground, Yuma, Ariz., in January. A training obstacle course played a central role in teaching teams to become effective and lethal assets.

**Sgt Ian Kozlik and Patriot strengthen their bond while training on an obstacle course at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground, Jan. 8.**



# Misguided National Ambition And the Death of Captain John Williams

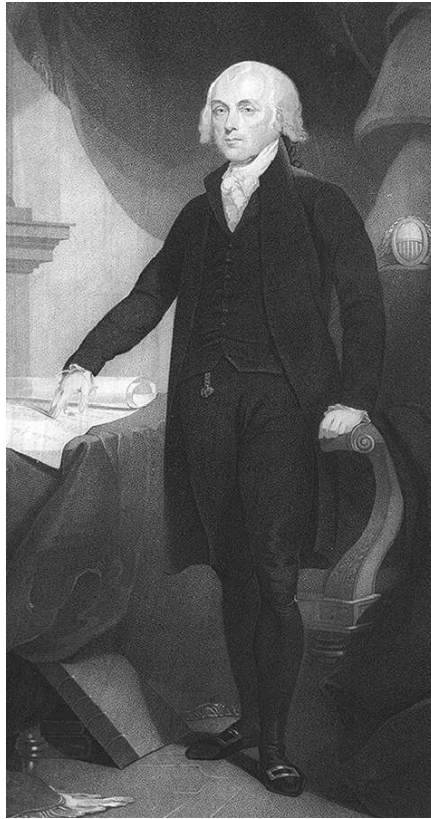
By MSgt Jeff Dacus, USMCR (Ret)

Throughout our nation's history, the Marine Corps has been called to action during many controversial conflicts. During the early years of the Republic, there were many unauthorized military expeditions into foreign territory by such figures as Aaron Burr and William Walker. Burr's expedition into Mexico never came to fruition, and Walker attempted several forays into Latin America before he was killed in Honduras. Another murky expedition with dubious motives and objectives that drew the United States Marine Corps into its controversial web was the Patriot War of 1811-1812.

East Florida, in the early years of the 19th century, was a wilderness of forests, swamps and thick jungle. It was sparsely populated by natives, escaped slaves, a few Spanish and even fewer Americans or British. Sovereignty had passed between Spain and Britain several times with Spain in control in 1811.

The border between Georgia and East Florida was a constant source of violence. Slaves escaped from captivity in Georgia and fled to the Spanish Territory in search of freedom in the maroon communities of escaped slaves and free ancestors of slaves, located in the rough, wooded country. Some hid in Seminole Indian villages, but others became slaves to the Spanish or Seminoles. Many began a new life of freedom in the native or Spanish settlements. Georgian slaveowners often crossed the border in search of their fugitives.

In addition, pirates, natives, and free blacks frequently raided farms and villages in Georgia, resulting in punitive expeditions by the local militia. In return, the Spanish authorities armed and encouraged the natives to attack into Georgia in order to keep the Americans at bay. Georgia's governor, David B. Mitchell, joined a chorus of his fellow citizens demanding action from the federal government. Adding to this tension, the United States and Great Britain were slowly moving on a path toward war. With Britain a possible ally of Spain, many Americans feared that East Florida might prove to be an invasion route if war erupted between the British and Americans.

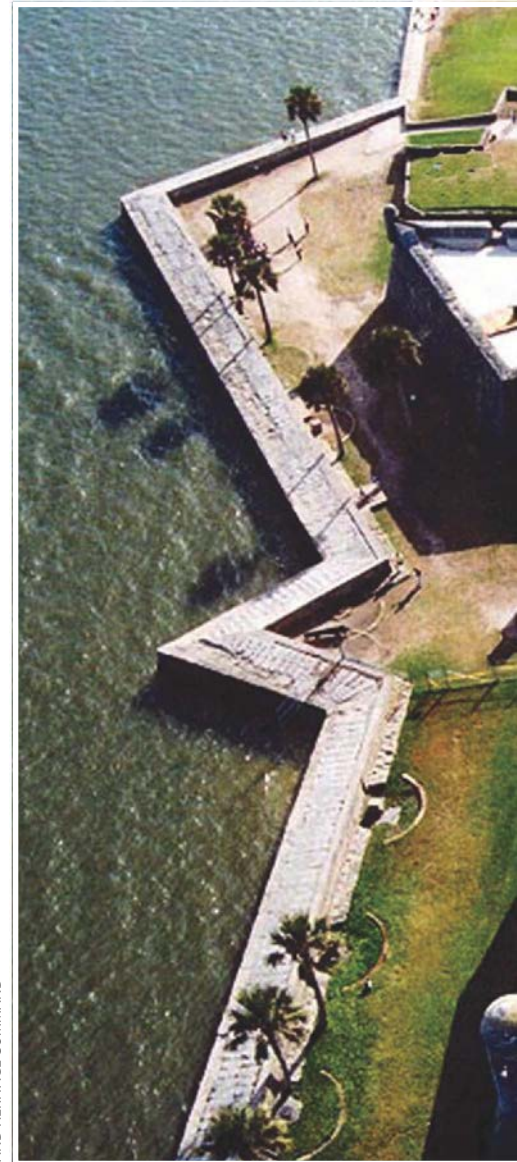


President James Madison



Paul Hamilton, Secretary of the Navy

On Jan. 25, 1811, Congress passed a resolution that authorized military action against East Florida. At the same time, President James Madison appointed George Mathews of Georgia as a peace commissioner with the authority to make a deal for the acquisition of East Florida. Mathews' peace mission failed and he pressed for military action. Madison



PORTRAIT BY THOMAS SULLY, COURTESY OF LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

PORTRAIT BY G. B. MATHEWS, COURTESY OF THE NAVY ART COLLECTION, U.S. NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

ordered the Secretary of the Navy, Paul Hamilton, to dispatch a detachment of Marines to Cumberland Island on the Georgia coast just north of Florida. The Marines would man a base for a small flotilla of U.S. Navy vessels operating in the area.

On March 13, 1812, local "Patriots" led by U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Thomas A. Smith, supported by U.S. Navy gunboats under Commodore Hugh Campbell, invaded northeastern Florida. They seized the island of Amelia, about 70 miles north of St. Augustine, just across the border from Georgia, intending to use it as a base for the conquest of all of Florida. They declared their new territory the Republic of East Florida and named



Faced by a garrison of troops equal to their own strength, the mixed bag of militia, regular U.S. Army troops, and various adventurers laid siege to Castillo de San Marcos, the fortification protecting St. Augustine.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**The American forces besieging the Castillo de San Marcos, the fortress protecting St. Augustine, Fla., did not have sufficient artillery to gain entry to the fort.**

John Houston McIntosh as their “director,” or president.

After their initial success, the Patriots moved down the coast of Florida until they arrived at St. Augustine. Faced by a garrison of troops equal to their own strength, the mixed bag of militia, regular U.S. Army troops, and various adventurers laid siege to Castillo de San Marcos, the fortification protecting St. Augustine. The Marine detachment was soon thrust into the middle of this volatile and diplomatically tricky situation.

The Marine Corps that was called into action in 1812 was under the command of

Lieutenant Colonel Commandant Franklin Wharton. The 45-year-old had been a Marine since 1798, serving primarily aboard the frigate *United States*. Oddly enough, he was appointed Commandant at age 36, after only five years as an officer. His Corps had a paper strength of 46 officers and 1,823 enlisted men. Wharton organized a detachment of one lieutenant, six noncommissioned officers, two musicians, and 39 privates to fulfill the president’s instructions. Chosen to command the detachment of Marines was Captain John Williams.

Williams was an unusual choice. Born



**George Mathews**

in Stafford County, Va., he lived the life of a gentleman farmer until 1805, when the Secretary of the Navy offered him a commission in the Marine Corps. He was 40 years old at the time. After promotion to first lieutenant in 1807, his career consisted of duty at the barracks in Washington, D.C. He was promoted to captain in early 1811. A close friend of the Commandant and his family, Williams was in the right place at the right time.

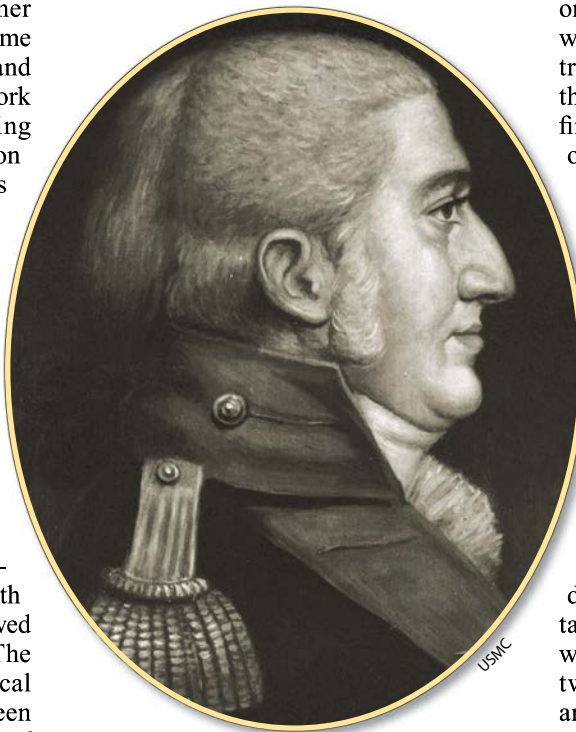
The Marines sailed on the schooner *Enterprise* on April 24, 1811. A short time later, they disembarked at Cumberland Island in Georgia. They were put to work as a garrison detachment, protecting the naval and logistics base located on the rugged island. After the Patriots seized Amelia Island in Florida, the Marines moved on to the settlement of Fernandina on the island to support naval operations from there.

During the year that Williams occupied Fernandina, seven Marines died of various diseases. Food was scarce and almost unpalatable. In addition, he found the militia and members of the Patriot Army undisciplined and unruly. The Marines chafed at the inaction while fighting was taking place farther south. Nevertheless, Williams was fair in dealing with the few citizens of Fernandina who viewed him as “mild, kind, and obliging.” The occupying Marines became a political football, tossed back and forth between the federal government and the state of Georgia. Secretary of the Navy Hamilton grew frustrated and ordered the Marines to return to Georgia on April 21, 1812. Governor Mitchell protested, and the Marines remained in Florida.

Outside of St. Augustine, the motley army of militia, adventurers, and U.S. Army soldiers had been unable to make headway against Castillo de San Marcos due to a lack of troops and artillery. Companies of Spanish militia streamed in from the countryside to bolster the garrison of the massive fort. A Spanish foray from St. Augustine pushed the Patriot’s Army a full 25 miles back from the town, and only the Army regulars were entrenched 4 miles from the fort. Recently promoted Colonel Smith protested: “With a weak

detachment, but badly provided, laying before one of the strongest fortified places on the Continent, containing a garrison five times our numbers, what can be expected from me?” Smith requested the Marines to join him as the Patriot Army was ineffective, writing to Williams: “You are acquainted with the difference between militia and regulars.”

On July 11, the Marines were sent to



**LtCol Commandant Franklin Wharton**

join the soldiers besieging St. Augustine. The Marines were tasked with ensuring the supply line from Fernandina to the soldiers was kept open. It was a difficult assignment, involving long marches in foul weather and rugged terrain with attacks by the roving bands of Spanish, Seminoles, and former slaves always a possibility. Three Marines were killed in one such assault not long after they began their task.

Meanwhile, political events outside of Florida changed the situation drastically. On June 18, 1812, Congress declared war on Great Britain. Suddenly, the United States faced a powerful enemy, and the expedition to Florida lost its importance.

President James Madison, whose enthusiasm for the project had waned, sent Governor Mitchell to negotiate with the Spanish.

Without support from the federal government and in a tricky political situation, Capt Williams and his men suffered physically, with many of the men ineffective due to disease. Rules of engagement also frustrated Williams, who wrote to his old friend Lieutenant Samuel Miller on Sept. 6, 1812, “I wish you, if you can, would find out the reason of the U.S. troops being kept in this province without the liberty of firing a gun unless we are fired upon. Our situation is an unpleasant one as well as a very unhealthy one.”

He wrote the Commandant requesting his troops be withdrawn and also sent a note to a girlfriend telling her, “I will return as soon as the Florida War is over.”

On Sept. 11, 1812, Captain Williams led a column of about 20 men, primarily Marines, with a militia officer, Captain Tomlinson Fort, as his second in command, to escort two wagons from the Army outside St. Augustine through the Twelve Mile Swamp to a blockhouse located on Davis Creek. This was a distance of more than 20 miles through tangled, swampy ground. The dark trail was narrow, barely wide enough for the two vehicles to pass. The militiamen and Marines frequently had to assist the teamsters in moving the wheels through the boggy ground. Williams was aware that the Spanish knew of his mission as just the day before one member of his detail had deserted to the Spanish.

In June of 1812, a new Spanish governor, Sebastian Kindelán y O’Regan, had arrived in East Florida. He was a skillful diplomat and made treaties and agreements with local Indians that would help drive out the invaders. He encouraged the Indians to join the runaway slaves in attacking the Americans, offering a \$10 reward for any American scalp. With such an incentive, a free black man named Prince Witten, a lieutenant in the Spanish militia, decided to attack William’s column. The day after Williams left the siege lines, Witten, with a few Seminole Indians,

**“I wish you, if you can, would find out the reason of the U.S. troops being kept in this province without the liberty of firing a gun unless we are fired upon. Our situation is an unpleasant one as well as a very unhealthy one.” —Capt John Williams**





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

**The painting, "Seminole Indians Ambush a U.S. Marines Supply Wagon, Sept. 11, 1812," by Col Charles H. Waterhouse, USMCR depicts the attempt by Marines and militia to fight back against dozens of unseen enemies.**

25 black militiamen, and a group of free blacks living with the Seminoles moved into the swampy wilderness to intercept Williams' column.

Just before nightfall on Sept. 12, and only a few miles from the blockhouse, Witten and his followers sprang their ambush. The first volleys felled Williams, his sergeant, and the horses pulling the first wagon. The Marines and militia went to ground as several others fell until there were eight wounded. Unable to move, Williams ordered his men into the brush.

The Marines quickly formed a defensive position and dragged their captain to its cover. The wounded sergeant was not so lucky. The natives scalped him and, mercifully, he quickly succumbed to his injuries. Williams was hit eight times. A furious battle ensued with the attackers unable to finish off the small column. The militia leader, Captain Fort, was also wounded in the knee and unable to lead the charge he bravely but foolishly wished to make. Williams calmly formed a base of fire and organized a bayonet assault that forced the attackers to retreat in confusion, although they managed to destroy one wagon and took the other wagon with them. Witten's force filled the captured wagon with their wounded and disappeared into the brush.



PORTRAIT BY WILLIAM BARCLAY NAPTON

**Col Thomas Smith**

Unable to stand due to his wounds, Williams crawled off the trail into the underbrush after instructing Fort to take the able-bodied on to the blockhouse to obtain help. Hiding the wounded in the brush, the survivors moved off into the fading light.

The next morning, a column from the blockhouse under Army Lieutenant Elias Stallings returned to the ambush site and retrieved the captain. They also found

six men missing from the previous day's attack, also hidden in the underbrush. Williams was in poor condition, writing (or dictating due to his situation) to Commandant Wharton: "My right leg is broke, my right hand shot through with three balls, my left arm broken, my left leg shot through, a ball in my left thigh near the groin; another through the lower part of my body, which renders me altogether helpless." Yet he was upbeat in concluding the letter: "You may suppose that I am in a dreadful situation, tho' I hope I shall recover in a few months." Unfortunately, he was too optimistic, dying on Sept. 29 at Hollingsworth's Plantation. A newspaper reported: "Captain Williams expired yesterday. He was a brave and honest man." Williams was buried at St. Mary's, Georgia. On Dec. 19, 1812, Lieutenant Colonel Wharton ordered Marine officers to wear black on their left arm and sword hilt for one month in honor of Williams.

The remaining Marines stayed on until May 13, 1813, under Lieutenant Alexander Sevier. Withdrawn from Florida, most would participate in the Battle of Bladensburg near Washington, D.C., on Aug. 24, 1814.

With the defeat of Williams' column, support for the filibustering expedition into Florida fell apart. Col Smith decided



**“Williams’ ambush was the catalyst, the pivotal watershed, which caused the abrupt termination of the American attempt to obtain forcible possession of Spanish East Florida.” Within a few weeks, the entire expedition was on its way back to Georgia.—Col Joseph Alexander, USMC (Ret)**

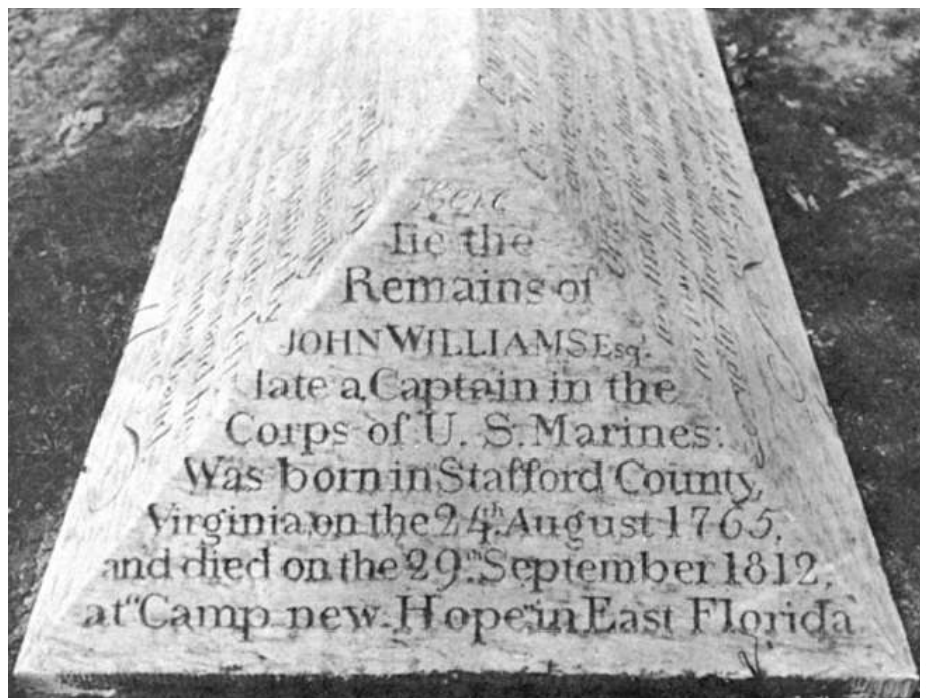
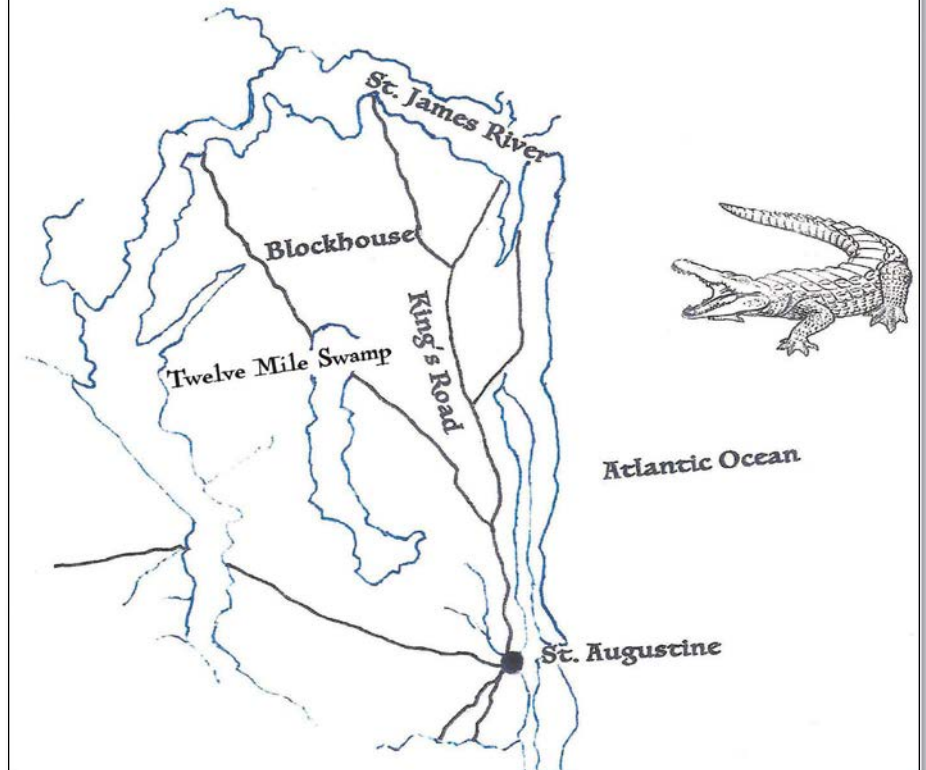
that it was too difficult to maintain the siege of St. Augustine without an efficient supply system, and two days after the ambush of William’s column, he ordered his men to retreat from St. Augustine, burning their shacks and fortifications. According to a 1978 article by Colonel Joseph Alexander in the *Florida Historical Quarterly*, “Williams’ ambush was the catalyst, the pivotal watershed, which caused the abrupt termination of the American attempt to obtain forcible possession of Spanish East Florida.” Within a few weeks, the entire expedition was on its way back to Georgia.

Other expeditions would be attempted, including one by future president Andrew Jackson in 1817, but all failed to garner popular support. The Spanish government, realizing that they would never be able to populate, defend, or make economic use of Florida, decided to sell the province to the United States, and it became part of the United States with the ratification of the Adams-Onís Treaty of 1821.

Nearly 100 years after his death, Capt John Williams’ grave was noticed by a group of Marine officers during a visit to St. Mary’s. In 1904, his body was removed from the rough grave with a “pile” monument and moved to Arlington National Cemetery. Part of the inscription on the monument tells the story of the battle but also took stock of Williams as a leader: “Eminently characterized by cool intrepidity, Captain Williams, envied, during this short but severe contest, those military requisites, which qualify the officer for command and if his sphere of action was too limited to attract the admiration of the world, it was sufficiently expanded to crown his with the approbation of his country, and to add to his brethren in arms, an example as highly useful, as his exit was sealed with honor the life of a patriot-soldier.” It is a fitting tribute to a Marine whose death contributed to the end of a dubious national undertaking.

*Author’s bio: MSgt Jeff Dacus, USMCR (Ret) lives in Vancouver, Wash. He is a retired history teacher. His 23 years as a Marine include a combat deployment during Operation Desert Storm as a tank platoon sergeant.*

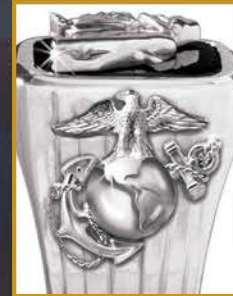
**The Death of Captain John Williams  
Ambush Sept. 11-13, 1812**



**This “pile” monument is located at the grave of Capt John Williams in Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va. It was moved there, along with his remains, in 1904.**



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# Leatherneck Laffs



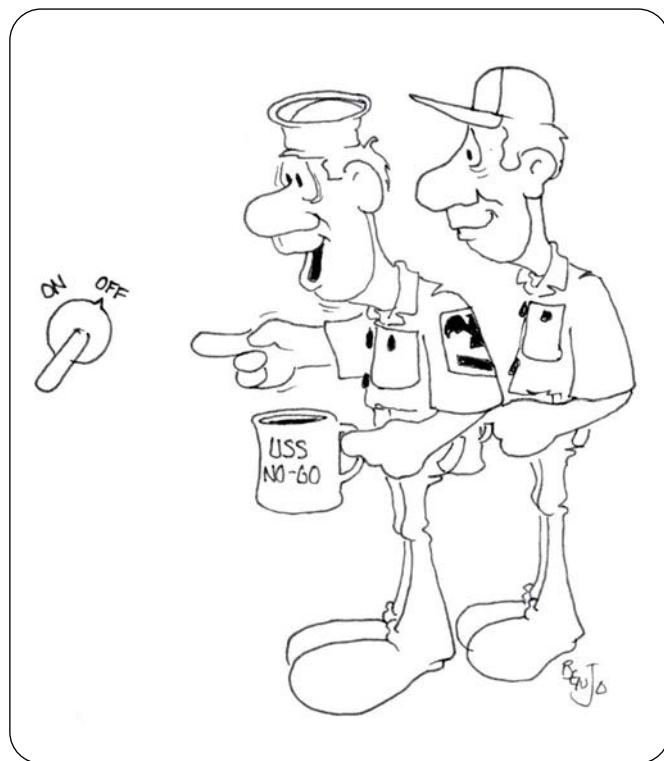
"When are we issued our GPS?"



"Before, I had to worry about cleaning my weapon. Now, I have to worry about debugging my hard drive."



"Why do they call you 'Shaky?'"



"I just shut off the water to the Marines' showers. We should hear about it in 5, 4, 3 ..."





"Pretend it's your computer and your user name is 'Marine recruit' and your password is 'lock-n-load.' Now aim and shoot!"



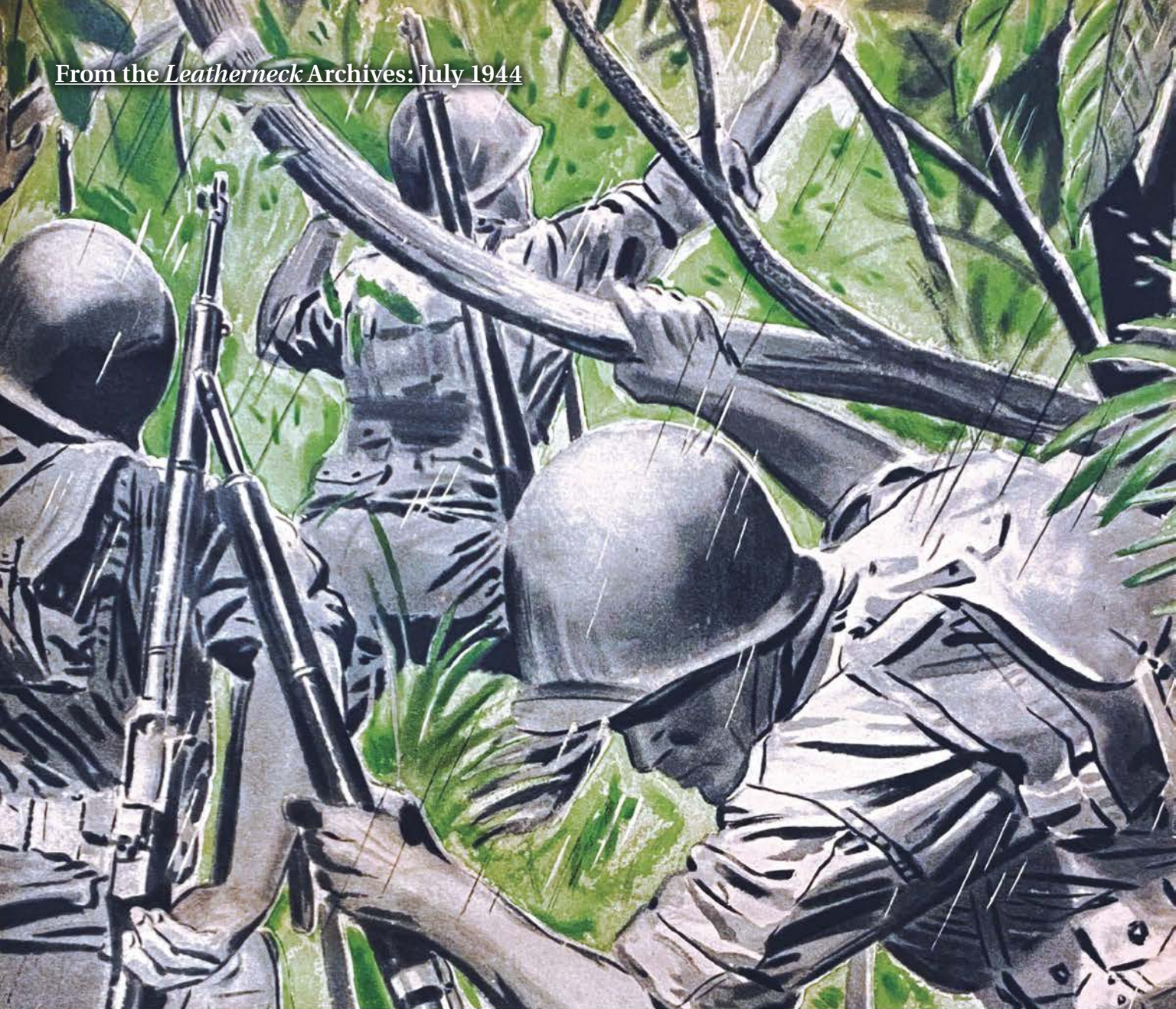
"Let me get this straight. You don't starch your cammies, or spit shine your boots, or shine your brass? What do you do all day?"



"Sir, I found the M16s. Should I click Add to Cart?"







# Three Days—Five Miles

## A VICTORY ON NEW BRITAIN

By Sgt Asa Bordages, USMC

**T**he greenest replacement knew it was the prelude to a banzai charge. The enemy was blasting more heavily now with his mortars. The machine guns stepped up their angry tempo. The Japanese were jabbering shrilly in their trenches. The nearest Marines could see the glint of sun on fixed bayonets. They could only wait for the charge as they lay deployed in the

swamp beside the trail which winds from Volupai to the Talasea airdrome on New Britain. A banzai is far from a nice thing to have to wait for.

Corporal “Digger” Batten didn’t wait. Digger received the Silver Star on Guadalcanal; his main interest in life was keeping people from finding out that he had been christened Linoard Mederice. He crept forward a little

**It was tough going. The hill was so steep in some places that men had to grab saplings and pull themselves up.**



and then stepped from cover. He had to expose himself to fire into the Japanese trenches.

He stepped out and started spraying them with his tommy gun. The enemy's fire slashed around him. His men saw him kill at least three Japanese and they heard others screaming. They yelled for him to get down. Digger just stood there, pouring bullets into the enemy trenches, until a slug smashed into his shoulder.

That knocked him down, but he rolled over and kept firing until his men dragged him to cover. They started snaking him out of the swamp under fire, but Cpl Batten had some business to attend to first.

"Damn it, Bevz," he called to his assistant squad leader. "Damn it to hell, bend your flank before those [Japanese] come out here and hurt somebody!"

The firing died. It was quiet in the jungle. If the Japanese had been planning a charge, as the Marine officers were sure they were, Linoard Mederice "Digger" Batten had changed their minds for them.

Digger Batten's squad was hit just 350 paces in from the beach along the twisting trail across the waist of the Willaumez Peninsula which leads to the airdrome. The trail is only 5 miles long, but it took the Marines three days to make the journey.

Almost halfway along the road from Cape Gloucester to Rabaul, Willaumez Peninsula juts out into the Pacific, some 40 miles long, from 3 to 15 miles—jungles and mountains, swamps and plantations, hot sulphur springs and steaming geysers, with Talasea in a coconut grove on a harbor about midway on the eastern shore.

The Japanese knew we were coming; they expected us to sail around the peninsula and attempt a landing near Talasea.

But the Marines repeated their Cape Gloucester trick. The Marines came in the back door while the enemy guarded the front. Despite the surprise of the Marines' choice of a landing place, Japanese resistance stiffened swiftly as reinforcements of infantry, artillery, mortars and machine gun units were brought into action.

Major Gordon D. Gayle's column passed through the shallow beachhead and started inland on a trail of hard-packed mud, a narrow corridor between a jungle swamp on the left and the first high ridge of Little Mount Worri rising from the right edge of the path.

The enemy was dropping mortar shells on the trail as well as on the beach behind us. More than 20 Marines were killed or wounded by a single shell on the beach. Three men were hit on the trail.

A squad of Marines began climbing the steep wall of the hill on the right of the trail. If they could go forward along the hill and then swing down again, they might be able to hit the Japanese from the flank.

But there were Japanese on the hill, too. They were there to block just such a move. And they were trying to slip past our flank so they could throw downhill fire into our column strung out along the trail.

Corporal Joseph Gura, 25, of McKeesport, Pa., deployed his men to hold the Japanese and started back to report the situation. Cpl Gura, armed with a tommy gun, was some distance from his men when he saw a Japanese officer above the Marines. The officer seemed to be rallying the scattered Japanese to hit the squad from above.

**The rest of the way was under enemy fire, and the gun crew had to push that 1,000-pound gun by hand. Their only chance of getting through was to crawl, pushing the gun as they went, using the weapon as a shield.**

"So I give him a burst," said Corporal Gura. "But he gets up and starts to throw a grenade down on the boys. So I give him another burst, and he don't try nothing after that."

Cpl Gura missed Digger Batten's show as he made his way to Maj Gayle's command post. The major called back for a tank.

The tank came rumbling up the trail, only to run over a land mine buried in its path. At almost the same moment, as the tank fired at the grove with cannon and machine guns, two Japanese darted from the brush beside the trail. The riflemen riddled them but they were too close to be stopped. They slapped two magnetic mines on the tank. The explosion killed two of the riflemen, knocked out the tank commander, dazed the crew and threw the turret into lock.

It was then that Jake Block got his crack at the Japanese. He's Marine Gunner Jacob Ingwert Block of Harvey, N.D., known as "Jake" throughout the outfit, a Marine for more than 15 years before he got his present rank after Guadalcanal. Of course the rank is now officially Warrant Officer, but you'll never hear a Marine say that. It's still "Gunner."

Gunner Block snooped up the trail until he spotted a giant banyan tree just where the trail started past the grove. The tree was fully 20 feet around, maybe more. It was just what he wanted.

He used a jeep to pull in a light field piece, a gun standing hardly waist high. The jeep dropped the gun some 50 yards from the banyan tree. The rest of the way was under enemy fire, and the gun crew had to push that 1,000-pound gun by hand. Their only chance of getting through was to crawl, pushing the gun as they went, using the weapon as a shield. Riflemen and machine guns covered their slow advance to protect them from an enemy rush.

Seven men took the gun up. Among them was a boy who gave permanents and finger waves in a McMinnville, Tenn., beauty parlor before he joined the Marines, Cpl James A. Rogers. There was a foundry worker, a clerk from a hardware store, a machinist, a truck driver. The oldest was 25; the youngest, 18.

"Nobody was happy about it, but we got going," said the gun chief, Cpl Colon Newsome, who used to be a plant manager for Seaboard Oil Company in Inverness, Fla.

Bullets clanged on the gun shield. Somebody said, "Lousy—!" The others saved their breath for pushing. It was inch by inch, crawling on hands and knees, sweating, pushing the half-ton of gun slowly forward. Afterward, they wondered how the hell they got through that machine-gun fire. But they didn't wonder about anything while they were doing it. They just shoved.

The Japanese started yelling. "What's eating them?" The Marine sounded sore at the Japanese for yelling. Somebody was blowing a whistle in the grove.

Cpl Jack McCusker of Charleroi, Pa., spat as they paused for breath.

"Must be chow call," he said. Well, they had a bellyful for them! They opened up with canister. They made a sieve of the tin shack in a grove of trees where the Japanese were dug in. Some of the Japanese tried to get out of the trenches. The canister scythed the parapet clean. Then they threw high explosive shells at the farther Japanese positions.

The infantry was closing in for the kill. A tank was rumbling on into the coconut groves of Volupai plantation, almost 600 yards in from the beach. The column was moving again. The Japanese who weren't dead were running.

The Marines' front line was in the plantation 800 yards or more from the beach when darkness forced a halt. Maj

Gayle formed his force in a big circle, an all-around defense that included the captured Japanese strong point, and dug in. Some of the Marines didn't have to dig in. They slept on the parapet of the Japanese trenches. All they'd have to do was roll in if attacked. They didn't bother the dead Japanese huddled in the bottom of the trenches.

"They won't start stinking for a couple of days," a Marine said. "And we'll be gone by then."

The Marines expected a counterattack during the night. Part of the force had to stay awake around our circle. The rest of us wrapped up in ponchos and went to sleep. The smoking lamp was out. A gleaming cigarette would be a perfect target for a sniper. You lay in the dark, willing to give 10 bucks if you could just have one solitary, crumpled cigarette.

It began to rain. Sometimes a rat ran across you. You just knocked him off and went back to sleep.

At 4:45 a.m. there was a burst of fire and yelling. Four or five grenades exploded in our lines. The Japanese threw them at gun flashes. Two of our men were hit by the fragments. Then the Japanese fled.

As we made coffee over Japanese canned heat, warming canned rations or bolting them down cold, getting gear ready to move out again, we didn't know a Japanese was hidden in camp.

**H**e must have lain in the weeds when the Marines searched the huge copra drying oven. Then he must have crawled in when night fell and closed the door behind him. Marines slept on top of the oven without knowing he was inside. But as the Marines moved out in the morning, he didn't wait long enough before coming out of the oven. Some Marines saw his legs as he climbed out backward. He bolted and they shot him.

The scout detachment found no Japanese just ahead of us in the jungle, but the column had to go slowly because the road was mined. The Japanese buried the discus-shaped land mines along the sides of the trail as they fell back. Each time the point found a mine, the word passed back for a demolition man to delouse it.

The column moved over a high ridge capturing a heavy mortar the enemy had abandoned as they withdrew, finding a few bloodstains on the trail. Then we moved down into the jungle valley again. And at a bend in the trail, where the path ran around the nose of the ridge and crossed a dry creek bed, the point was hit again.

The enemy was dug in across the creek bed, his defense centering around a cluster of shacks on rising ground. His line ran down across the dry creek bed and up the



nose of the hill on our right. Our column was strung out along the trail in a drenching rain; a jungle deluge.

A security detachment sent to the top of the hill ran into the enemy trying to come along the ridge to attack us on the flank from above. That was where Ben Drake was killed. Sergeant Benjamin Kimber Drake was 26 and came from Elmira, N.Y. He used to be a champion wrestler in the Navy. He wouldn't wrestle anymore for fear of hurting somebody who didn't understand the tricks. Nobody in the outfit had more friends. Old timers and the greenest kids, they all said Ben Drake was the kind of a guy who made an outfit tick. We'd seen him on the beach unloading gear. There'd been some kidding—the old gag about a strong back and a weak mind.

Now he was dead up there above us in the brush. He'd been leading his squad in a rush to stop the enemy advance along the ridge when he caught a bullet between the eyes.

"We lost 10 men when we lost Ben Drake," an officer said.

His squad didn't say anything. But up on the hill around Ben Drake's body, they held against the worst the Japanese could throw. Even when it seemed they must be wiped out unless they fell back, they stayed there and fought. The only way they went that day was forward.

The enemy was pushing more men up the hill. Sgt William O. Kivett of Eveningshade, Mo., saw a Japanese machine-gun crew coming into position as his squad was setting up. He started at them alone with his carbine. He killed three of the Japanese. By that time his squad was ready. The Marines machine gunned the other three Japanese before they could get their gun into action.

The enemy swung forces far around the other side of the hill. He started troops up the other side all along the ridge. The job of beating him to the top was given to "Fox" Company, the outfit which fought the Battle of Nameless Hill on Dec. 30 in the kunai grass south of Cape Gloucester airdrome.

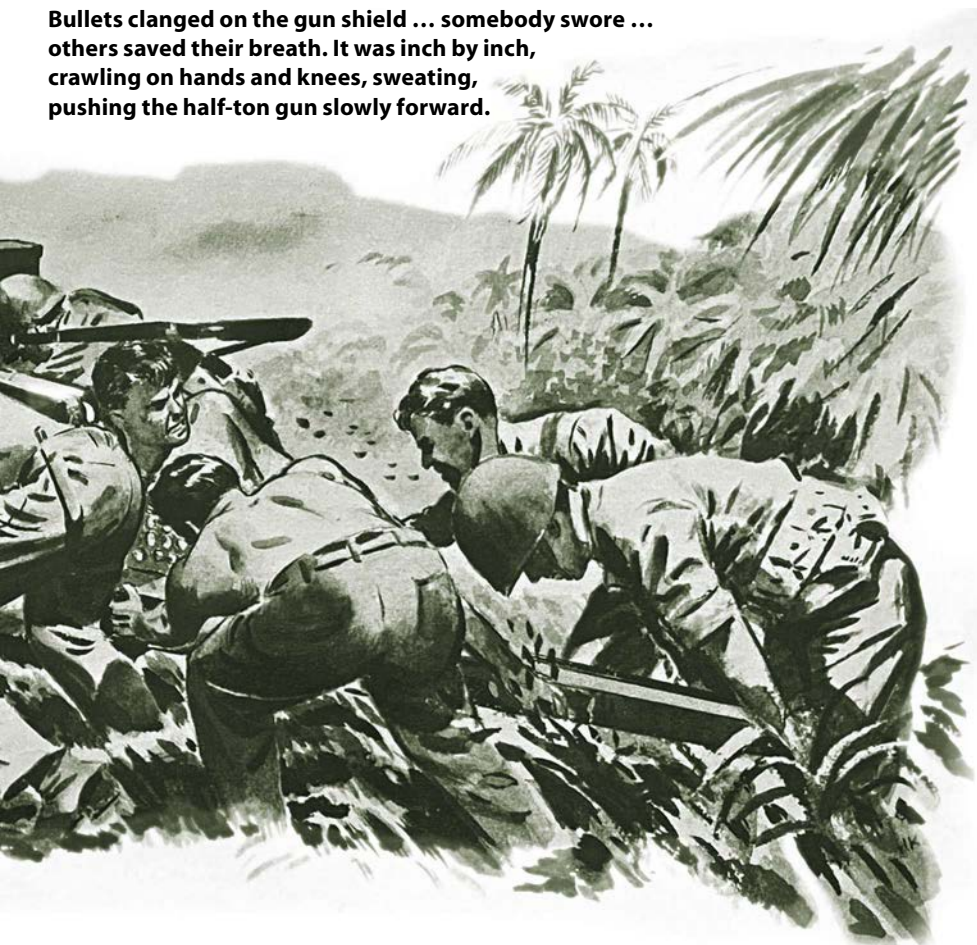
The platoons, each in file, started up from different points along the trail where the Marines' column was strung out in the rain, wet and chilled, miserable, just waiting in the mud.

It was tough going. In places the hill was so steep that men had to grab saplings and pull themselves up. Men were panting before they'd climbed 20 feet. And it was some hundreds of feet to the top. But the going was as hard for the enemy.

Whoever held the ridge controlled the trail that ran along its base. That trail was the Marines' supply route; the lifeline of the advance. If the Japanese got the top



**Bullets clanged on the gun shield ... somebody swore ... others saved their breath. It was inch by inch, crawling on hands and knees, sweating, pushing the half-ton gun slowly forward.**



of the ridge, the Marines' position would be untenable. They would have to give up the drive on Talasea or take the hill. That was the stake for which the Marines and the Japanese were racing up opposite sides of the hill in the rain.

The first to reach the top were two Marines, two scouts some distance ahead of their toiling platoon. They were Cpl Fuller Curtis, 25, of Garrison-on-Hudson, N.Y., and Private First Class John S. Best, 19, of Hatboro, Pa.

They almost ran past the first Japanese. He had beaten them to the top of the hill and was lying in the brush. He was sighting in on them when he carelessly moved his feet. But the sound brought Cpl Curtis spinning around, spraying bullets at the noise. The Japanese was dead before he could squeeze the trigger.

A few yards farther on, just over the crest, the scouts ran head-on into nine or 10 Japanese toiling up the hill. The scouts dived for a big tree, one of them firing around each side, and the Japanese scattered for cover. One of the Japanese fell on his face and didn't move. For the next few minutes, while the platoon climbed up the hill behind them, the two scouts held that part of the ridge against the enemy, hardly 20 yards away.

"Johnny heaved a couple of grenades and we heard them screaming when the grenades exploded," Cpl Curtis said. "We kept on shooting and it was pretty hot for a few minutes. The platoon was coming up, and we moved toward the Japanese trees. I heard something in the brush. It was a Japanese sniper. He was wearing a camouflage suit and we wouldn't have seen him if he'd stayed still. But he was trying to crawl away."

The Marines won by a safer margin, perhaps three or four minutes, in the race

**Even when it seemed they must be wiped out unless they fell back, the Marines stayed and fought it out on the road to Talasea airport.**

to other parts of the crest. They didn't wait for the Japanese coming up just below them. They deployed and started for them.

In that charge to meet the Japanese coming up the hill was red-headed Sgt Byrd Mitchell and his box of cigars.

Sgt Mitchell was born and raised in Washington, D.C., where he was a street car operator before he joined the Marines. The evening we shoved off on this blitz,

a little mail got up to us. There was a box of cigars for Sgt Mitchell, his first in months. He didn't have a chance to light one before the word came to move. He had them tied on his back and he'd been worried all day about what the rain would do to them. They were still there as he went into battle. It was the second time Sgt Mitchell had led the men into combat as Acting Platoon Sergeant.

"The first bunch I saw was about 20," he said. "They came a-charging. When we stopped shooting, we counted 17 of them dead. That was when we started down the hill to meet 'em as they came up. They were yelling and making a lot of noise. It sounded like a potful of 'em."

The enemy fought desperately to check the Marines' downhill movement, but the Marines blasted them out of the way, moving forward with assault fire. Sergeant Mitchell defined assault fire as "everybody shooting with everything you've got."

It was hot going. Sgt Mitchell says, "Bullets was like bumble bees. They was everywhere."

The Marines knocked out a Japanese automatic weapon position. Sgt Mitchell picked up a Nambu light machine gun. He tried a few bursts. He picked up some clips of ammunition, slung his carbine and went on blasting the enemy with their own gun.

"I didn't know how it would shoot, but I knew any gun like that will rise as you fire," he said. "So when we saw 'em downhill ahead of us, I just shot under them 8 or 10 feet and let 'er rise. It cut 'em in two."

The lowest count of Sgt Mitchell's personal kill was nine enemy fighters. Some of the boys think he got 12 or 15.

Some of the Japanese fought until they were killed. Some tried to run away downhill, and the Marines mowed them down. Sgt Mitchell said, "It was like shooting fish in a rain barrel." Some of the Japanese killed themselves.

As the Marines came down the hill toward him, one Japanese took off his shoe. He looped a string around the trigger of his rifle. He put the muzzle under his chin. Then stuck his big toe in the loop and pushed. He was dead when Sgt Mitchell's platoon passed him.

A bullet hit Sgt Mitchell in the jaw. It knocked three of his teeth inboard and made him sore. He stood bolt upright, spitting blood, swearing, splashing fire into the bushes where the Japanese were running. A corpsman tried to make him stop for treatment, tried to make him go to the rear, but Sgt Mitchell said, "Get the hell out of my way."

He kept fighting until stopped by the lieutenant. Then, after he was treated at





Editor's note: Tim Eby recently sent *Leatherneck* a letter that his father, PFC Marion C. Eby, left, wrote to his family on Aug. 22, 1944, while he was serving with Hq Co, 2nd Bn 5th Marines in the Pacific. PFC Eby tells his parents to be sure to read "Three Days—Five Miles" in the July 1944 *Leatherneck* because his unit was the basis of the article. We thought our readers would enjoy reading the article, along with an excerpt from Eby's letter.

**"I'm glad you got your first edition of the *Leatherneck* and very glad you got the July issue 'cause I want you to read the story in it titled Three Days—Five Miles. I was with that outfit that the story is about. You'll see by reading it on page eight in the third and fourth sentence just what our company did. I was the fourth man to the top of that hill ... and was with Sergeant Mitchell when he, well you read for yourself. Best and Curtis were just in front of me so I had a little of that fun they told about too. Read all of the story and that's what I've been trying to explain to you, in a round about way, in my letters."**

COURTESY OF TIM EBY

*I'm glad you got your first edition of the Leatherneck and very glad you got the July issue cause I want you to read the story in it titled Three Days-Five Miles. I was with that outfit that the story is about. You'll see by reading it on page eight in the third and fourth sentence just what our company did. I was the fourth man to the top of that hill to and was with Sgtant Mitchell when he, well you read for yourself, Best & Curtis were just in front of me so I had a little of that fun they told about too. Read all of the story and thats what I've been trying to explain to you, in a round about way, in my letters.*

the aid station set up a few feet off the trail, Sgt Mitchell kept trying to get back to his outfit until he was ordered back with the wounded being evacuated.

As he waited to be taken back, Sgt Mitchell at last opened his cigars. He tried to smoke, but his face hurt when he tried to draw on the cigar. And the rain was coming through the box. They'd be a sodden mass before he got to the beach.

"The damndest things happen to me," he said.

He began giving away his cigars. Dozens of Marines squatting in the mud or moving up to the firing line were puffing on his cigars or chewing them unlit when the discouraged Sgt Mitchell finally left for the rear.

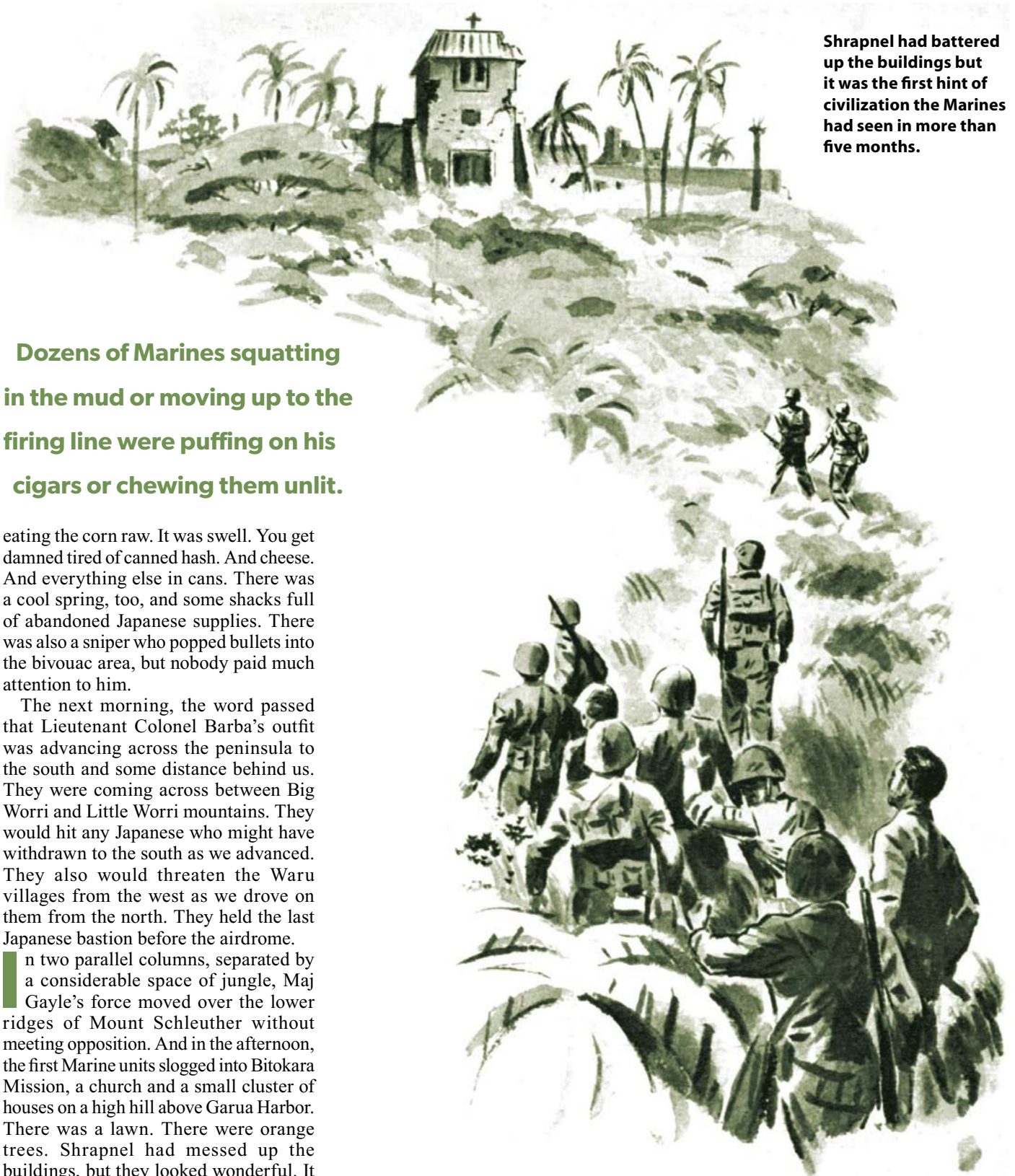
"Three more battles, and maybe they'll knock off the 'Acting,'" said Acting Platoon Sergeant Mitchell. "You can't spend 'Acting' worth a damn."

The hill was secure now, the Marines dug in along the ridge, but the Japanese

strongpoint still held up the column at the creek bed. It was another job for Gunner Block. Again the field piece was manhandled to the front, dragged and pushed and heaved through the mud. Again the field piece blasted the Japanese out of their position with canister and High Explosive. Again the enemy took it on the lam.

The Marines dug in that night beyond the captured Japanese strongpoint. They stripped a cornfield in the bivouac area,





Shrapnel had battered up the buildings but it was the first hint of civilization the Marines had seen in more than five months.

**Dozens of Marines squatting in the mud or moving up to the firing line were puffing on his cigars or chewing them unlit.**

eating the corn raw. It was swell. You get damned tired of canned hash. And cheese. And everything else in cans. There was a cool spring, too, and some shacks full of abandoned Japanese supplies. There was also a sniper who popped bullets into the bivouac area, but nobody paid much attention to him.

The next morning, the word passed that Lieutenant Colonel Barba's outfit was advancing across the peninsula to the south and some distance behind us. They were coming across between Big Worri and Little Worri mountains. They would hit any Japanese who might have withdrawn to the south as we advanced. They also would threaten the Waru villages from the west as we drove on them from the north. They held the last Japanese bastion before the airdrome.

In two parallel columns, separated by a considerable space of jungle, Maj Gayle's force moved over the lower ridges of Mount Schleuther without meeting opposition. And in the afternoon, the first Marine units slogged into Bitokara Mission, a church and a small cluster of houses on a high hill above Garua Harbor. There was a lawn. There were orange trees. Shrapnel had messed up the buildings, but they looked wonderful. It was our first hint of civilization in more than five months. And off in the distance, as they sucked the green skinned oranges, the Marines could see the coconut palms of Talasea.

With the mission as a base, part of Maj Gayle's force moved southward toward the Waru villages along the trail that breaks off at the first shrine of Bitokara.

The airdrome was more than 2,200 yards away. Much of the trail was steeply up hill and down. In places, the trail almost fades out and was difficult to follow. The men were sure they'd be hit as they slogged along. Okay, they were used to it.

But just 80 minutes from the time they filed downhill from the mission, 80 minutes that had even the ruggedest

puffing—they captured Talasea airdrome without firing a shot. The first two Marines on the overgrown strip were the scouts, Cpl Curtis and PFC Best. It was 4:20 p.m., March 8, third day of the drive.

*Editor's note: These illustrations, by H. Koskinen, were used with the article's original 1944 layout.*

## SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

### My Plan Backfired

I think other Marines might get a chuckle out of a mistake I almost made as a recruit at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island in May 1966, approximately three weeks before my graduation. One night after chow, our senior drill instructor (DI) announced that 10 recruits were chosen to stand guard duty on the women Marines' side of the island that evening. We were instructed to report to the front of our barracks with our rifles and web belts with bayonets at 11 p.m. where the corporal of the guard would pick us up and we would stand guard until 7 a.m. the following day.

We were all around 19 years of age and very homesick, and we were very excited about the prospect of meeting women Marine recruits if we got a chance.

I was disappointed that my first post was a long concrete building that had a 12-foot-high fence around it. I walked this post until 3 a.m. when another recruit replaced me. I was then transported to what I thought was the women's barracks as it was a one story brick building with a sidewalk that went completely around it. It was a very boring post. Around 5:30 a.m. I noticed lights came on inside the building and occasionally could see someone walk by a window. My plan was to make sure that I was in front of the building when I heard the front door open so I could get a chance to speak to any of the female recruits who exited the building.

I noticed a staff car pull up to the curb but the driver did not get out. Within

minutes I heard the front door open and just one Marine started walking up the sidewalk toward the car. I thought it was now or never so I quickened my pace. Fortunately it was light enough that when I got within 50 feet of this Marine I realized that this was a colonel and not a recruit. I did a perfect about face and hid behind the building until the car left.

I can't imagine the punishment my senior DI would have given me but suspect that I would still be doing push-ups today even though I just turned 74.

Cpl Mike Lang  
Parsippany, N.J.

### Disastrous Inspection

I was stationed in Dong Ha, Vietnam, in December 1968. I had driven the captain and first sergeant to the helo pad to pick up the commanding general, General Davis, for an inspection. The general said, "Let's look at the mess hall, then the living quarters." After dropping them off for the inspection, I was sitting in my jeep when the first sergeant came out and said, "Turn the jeep around." As I attempted to make a U-turn, I caught the corner of the jeep's windshield on the roof of the supply shack and the window exploded. The general walked up to the jeep, saw me covered with glass, his seat covered in glass, turned to the captain and said, "What a nice day. Let's walk."

LCpl Joseph A. Rodriguez  
Westland, Mich.

### Make Sure You Can Enforce Threats

While stationed at South Camp Fuji, Japan, in 1957 we had just completed an 11-day field problem. During our last night in the

field, headquarters brought out the beer truck and let us indulge. At 7 a.m. the next day we headed back to mainside, a 12-mile hike.

Suffice it to say there were a lot of hangovers, myself included. The first platoon sergeant and I were getting a lot of static from the company gunny about maintaining a five-pace interval in my platoon. The problem was that Private First Class Duncan kept falling behind, thus making

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Finally I told  
PFC Duncan that I  
would kick his a--  
if he didn't keep  
the proper interval.  
He glared at me  
but nonetheless  
followed my order.

---

the column behind him virtually double-time to keep up the pace. Finally I told PFC Duncan that I would kick his a-- if he didn't keep the proper interval. He glared at me but nonetheless followed my order.

After we got settled in the barracks after returning to mainside, my first squad leader came down to my quarters and said, "Sergeant Gill, I don't know whether you know it or not, but PFC Duncan was a middleweight Golden Gloves champion before he came into the Corps." At first I didn't realize why he was sharing this information with me. Then it hit me. If Duncan had accepted my challenge I might very likely have

taken a beating and lost a stripe or two. From that day forward I made damned sure I could enforce my threats or I didn't make them. It just goes to show that if you are lucky, you get a second chance.

SSgt Paul E. Gill  
USMC, 1954-1966  
Shippensburg, Pa.

### Women on Ship

In 1978, a group of three women from 7th Engineers, including one officer, were attached to a unit that was conducting an operation on San Clemente Island off the coast of California. Before its conclusion, Headquarters Marine Corps discovered that the women had arrived on the island by way of LCM (landing craft, mechanized). The battalion sergeant major was ordered "Get them off, now!" He secured a helicopter from 3rd Marine Air Wing and when it landed on the island, he instructed the women to pack their gear.

On the way back to the mainland, the aircraft developed hydraulic problems and was forced to land on USS *Enterprise* (CVAN-65) which was returning from a six-month deployment. The captain of the ship was livid that the sergeant major was attempting to ruin his career and told him "Get them off my ship, NOW!" The ship slowed to a crawl to enable another helicopter to "rescue" the women along with saving the career of the ship's commander. Although the women were hidden in the officer's quarters, every Sailor not on duty was standing nearby with their cameras to catch women boarding the new chopper.

As the women ran up the ramp, one of them hit a slick spot and landed face first.



The sergeant major picked her up, determined she didn't need medical care and got her into the helicopter. She was covered head to toe in grease and when she returned to her company office, her CO asked her what the hell had happened. She just referred him to the sergeant major. Ironically, about six months after this high drama event, women were given permission by Department of Defense to serve on naval vessels.

Sgt Vicky Marshall Hensley  
USMC, 1976-1980  
Wingate, Texas

### The Fourth Golfer

"Saved Round" in the September 2019 issue of *Leatherneck* brought back memories of my experience with Jack Webb's "The D.I." In June 1957, I was a recruit in Platoon 126, Company C, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island. Our battalion CO was Lieutenant Colonel Francis "Ike" Fenton. I did not know until years later that the colonel was the subject of a famous David Douglas Duncan photograph from the Korean conflict.

The Friday after Thanksgiving 1957, I was back finishing high school while continuing in the 53rd Rifle Company, USMCR. My stepfather, J. Drayton Ford, asked me to drive him and two golfing buddies to Parris Island where they would add a fourth golfer, a Marine, and play in a pro-am tournament. He and friends wanted to enjoy drinks afterwards and I was the designated driver.

While my passengers played golf, I located my drill instructors from my summer adventure. I found two of them in a barracks in 2nd Battalion. My senior DI had been promoted to master sergeant and moved to battalion schools. It was my good fortune that he dropped by to visit his old friends so I got to see

him too. It was a pleasant reunion and, of course, I never saw them again.

Meanwhile, at the officers' club Drayton and his friends were waiting. "Dave!" Drayton and friends were excited. "We have a surprise for you."

"What?"

"You'll see. The Marine assigned as our fourth player knows you!"

"Oh, he must be mistaking me for Paul." My brother was a three-striper assigned to the base armory. "Nobody knows me."

"No, no, no. He knows you as one of Forrestal Bowman's boys." Bowman was my senior drill instructor. "He remembers talking to you one night while you were on guard duty. He says you will know him when you see him. There he is."

"Colonel Fenton! Colonel Fenton was your fourth?"

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**"The Marine assigned as our fourth player knows you!"**

**"Oh, he must be mistaking me for Paul." My brother was a three-striper assigned to the base armory. "Nobody knows me."**

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"Yes, and he's one hell of a golfer!"

"Col Fenton, Sir, how nice to see you!"

"Thank you, David, I thought you might remember me. I remember you."

"But I don't remember you inspecting our platoon, Sir."

"I didn't. I encountered you one night on the road behind your barracks. You

were on guard duty and I was officer of the day. I inspected your rifle, drilled you on the general orders and asked questions like what you would do if the building caught fire, and then I asked you how you liked the movie. You were standing directly across from the outdoor theater, but you didn't take the bait. What did you say, David?"

"Movie, Sir?"

The movie was Jack Webb's "The D.I."

What a remarkable memory the colonel had.

Dr. David O. Whitten  
USMCR, 1957-1963  
Sullivan's Island, S.C.

### You Can't Count on Messmen

In 1966, after being trained as a radio relay tech for a year, I was a lance corporal in a 10th Marines outfit with no radio relay gear. After six months as a radio operator/forward observer, I volunteered for Vietnam to get back in my field. My battery was going on a six-month Caribbean float, so I was now surplus.

They sent me to Little Creek, Va., for two weeks of mess duty with the reserve. Part of that was three days on a ship during a beach assault exercise. We were supposed to help the Navy messmen. I was senior in a group of five or six, none of whom had yet been to Vietnam. We were in the very forward compartment and were supposed to be at the mess deck, if memory serves, at 0430. The chief messman promised to wake us.

The next morning, we came to about 0600. I hustled the guys to the mess facility and apologized, saying no one woke us. "Yeah," the chief messman said, "I figured if I came up there in the dark and woke up Marine Vietnam veterans, I might be done for." I looked sad and said, "Some of them are a bit jumpy." We got to

sleep in the next two days as well.

SSgt Robert A. Hall  
Madison, Wis.

### Short Order Cook

In 1972, I was a sergeant assigned to Headquarters & Headquarters Squadron at Marine Corps Air Station, Quantico, Va. One day I was in the squadron office when a private who was 5-foot nothing checked in for duty. He was a true feather merchant. I couldn't believe that he was in the Corps he was so little but I thought no more of it.

The next morning, I was in the mess hall in the noncommissioned officers (NCO) line, and saw the Marine manning the eggs to order grill for the NCOs. I am sure this young man went to cooks school or something, but he couldn't break an egg without screwing it up. All the NCOs ahead of me in line were yelling at him to get his "stuff" together and cook their breakfast. The private was terrified. I eventually got a "mess" of something egg-like and had my breakfast. We never saw him again. He went over the hill right after breakfast. That was 47 years ago, but I can still see his face.

Sometimes we need to treat our fellow Marines better.

Maj Robert M. Fields  
USMC (Ret)  
Bradenton, Fla.

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Do you have an interesting story from your time in the Corps that will give our readers a good chuckle? We would love to hear them. Write them down (500 words or less) and send them to: Patricia Everett, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to p.everett@mca-marines.org. We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA&F membership for the "Sea Story of the Month." 🍷



COURTESY OF NASA

**Marine Corps Maj Jasmin Moghbeli recently became one of NASA's newest astronauts after two years of rigorous training. Maj Moghbeli could potentially be assigned missions to the International Space Station, the moon or even Mars.**

## Marine Pilot Graduates From Astronaut Training Program

Major Jasmin Moghbeli, USMC, a Marine aviator and test pilot, was among 11 astronauts welcomed into NASA's ranks during a graduation ceremony at Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, Jan. 10. Moghbeli and the other new astronauts successfully completed more than two years of required basic training and are the first to graduate since the agency announced its Artemis program. The recent graduates may be assigned to missions destined for the International Space Station, the moon, and ultimately, Mars. With a goal of sustainable lunar exploration later this decade, NASA will send the first woman and next man to the surface of the moon by 2024. Additional lunar missions are planned once a year thereafter and human exploration of Mars is targeted for the mid-2030s.

"These individuals represent the best of America, and what an incredible time for them to join our astronaut corps," said NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine during the ceremony. "2020 will mark the return of launching American astronauts on American rockets from American soil and will be an important year of progress for our Artemis program and missions to the moon and beyond."

During Friday's ceremony, each new

astronaut received a silver pin, a tradition dating back to the Mercury 7 astronauts, who were selected in 1959. They will receive a gold pin once they complete their first spaceflights.

Selected for training in 2017, the NASA astronaut candidates were chosen from a record-setting pool of more than 18,000 applicants. Including the current class, NASA now has 48 active astronauts in its corps. NASA is also considering plans to open the application process this spring for the next class of astronaut candidates.

Moghbeli earned a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering with information technology at MIT and a master's degree in aerospace engineering from the Naval Postgraduate School. She also is a distinguished graduate of the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School. Moghbeli came to NASA from Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., where she tested H-1 helicopters and served as the quality assurance and avionics officer for Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron (VMX) 1. NASA

## Commandant Visits MARFORCYBER

General David H. Berger, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, visited Lasswell Hall, the Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command headquarters at the National

Security Agency campus in Fort Meade, Md., Jan. 9. The visit was his first introduction to the people behind Marine Corps cyberspace operations, and helped him to develop a deeper understanding of what they do.

The visit started with a brief from Major General Matthew G. Glavy, commander of MARFORCYBER and Joint Task Force Ares, the U.S. Cyber Command's offensive cyber task force against ISIS. MajGen Glavy explained the key infrastructure and cyberspace capabilities based out of Lasswell Hall as they toured the building. A brief on defensive and offensive cyberspace operations followed the building tour.

When Gen Berger addressed the Marines, he stressed the importance of MARFORCYBER's mission. He reminded the Marines that their enabling actions inform national security decision makers at the strategic level.

MajGen Glavy's leadership philosophy is summarized in the phrase "People, ideas, things ... in that order," which is posted on the wall in the Lasswell Hall entryway and is a mantra repeated every day within the command. MARFORCYBER's commander prioritizes people because he believes that without the right motivated, trained and empowered people, the mission would not be accomplished.



SSGT JACOB OSBORNE, USMC

**MajGen Matthew G. Glavy, commander of MARFORCYBER and Joint Task Force Ares, right, welcomes Gen David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, left, to Lasswell Hall, Fort Meade, Md., Jan. 9. Gen Berger was given a number of briefings and taken on a tour of the building where Marines conduct offensive and defensive cyber operations.**



During the briefings, Glavy emphasized the importance of the Marines and their ideas. Marines in charge of Marine Corps Enterprise Network (MCEN) modernization initiatives briefed the commandant on its milestones and dependencies and their value proposition to Marine Corps warfighters.

One of the projects is the Big Data Platform Cyber Hunt & Analytics Operation System (CHAOS), briefed by Major Richard Vaccariello, a special projects officer with MARFORCYBER.

The cloud-based platform will be the Marine Corps Enterprise Network's data collection site. It will facilitate situational awareness and a common operational picture for increased security. This system will allow for the sharing of data and increased security throughout the Department of Defense and mission partners.

"We need to have commonalities and integration with the Navy, but the systems need to be able to stand alone when they aren't there," Gen Berger said, adding that when the Navy and Marine Corps are working together, they are five times stronger than when each service operates alone.

MARFORCYBER conducts full-spectrum cyberspace operations to include operating and defending the Marine Corps Enterprise Network, conducting defensive cyberspace operations within the MCEN and joint force networks, and when directed, conducting offensive cyberspace operations in support of joint and coalition forces.

SSgt Jacob Osborne, USMC

### Marines Put New ACV to the Test On Camp Pendleton's Beaches

Marines with the Amphibious Vehicle Test Branch, Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity, tested the Amphibious Combat Vehicle's (ACV) maneuverability and performance during low-light and night operations on the beaches of Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 16-18, 2019. The Marines spent hours driving ACVs in the Southern California surf and the open ocean to assess how well they could interface with the vehicle and conduct operations in low light.

"AVTB has been on Camp Pendleton since 1943," said David Sandvold, the director of operations for AVTB. "We are the only branch in the military who uses our warfighters to test equipment that is in development."

The ACV will be replacing the Amphibious Assault Vehicle starting in late 2020. The AAV has been in service since 1972, deploying to countries around the world.



LCPL ANDREW CORTEZ, USMC

**Marines with AVTB, Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity take a new ACV out for open ocean low-light testing at Del Mar Beach, MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 17, 2019. The ACV is an eight-wheeled armored personnel carrier designed to fully replace the Corps' aging fleet of AAVs. The test was designed to assess how well Marines interface with the vehicle during the day and at night.**



LCPL ANDREW CORTEZ, USMC

The AAV has been the go-to vehicle to carry Marines and gear from ship to shore, but with adversaries around the world growing more powerful, the ACV was created to enhance the capabilities of ship-to-shore missions and amphibious assaults.

The ACV will come in four different variants derived from the armored personnel carrier base. There's a recovery variant, a command and control variant, and an up-armed variant to engage enemy armored vehicles. Each ACV comes equipped with eight wheels instead of the tracks originally on the AAV.

"It's a huge difference on how the ACV

and AAV drive and handle," said Sergeant Fernando Alvarez, an AAV operator with AVTB. "The main difference [with wheels] is that it's a lot faster on land. But instead of pivoting like the AAV, we have to make three-point turns now, which is not a problem."

The ACV powers through high surf, traverse trenches and sloped terrain. Its significant protective assets make it resilient to direct attacks and allow it to operate with degraded mobility in an ever-changing battle environment. The vehicle possesses sufficient lethality to deliver accurate fire support to infantry, whether stationary or on the move.



“Technology is modernizing,” explained Sandvold. “As we learn about the ACV, we see everything it has to offer.”

The ACV also has a unique V-shape underbelly to deflect the blast of improvised explosive devices. Since IEDs were the most lethal weapons used against AAVs, the new ACV was designed to take a blast from an IED, continue the mission and bring Marines home safely.

“I am loyal to tracs, but the more I learn about these vehicles, the more impressed I get with all its features and how it will improve our warfighting capabilities,” said Sandvold.

LCpl Andrew Cortez, USMC

## 2nd AA Bn First to Complete Camp Lejeune’s New LRC

More than 60 Marines with 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 2nd Marine Division became the first unit to navigate four different obstacles on the newly opened Leadership Reaction Course (LRC) at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Jan. 7.

“Marines gain a lot from this training, and most importantly, they gain the ability to think in a time-constrained, stressful situation,” said Staff Sergeant Donald McBee Jr., the mine countermeasure platoon sergeant with 2nd AA Bn. “There are

frictions that are thrown at them, having to think under pressure, giving them the ability to problem-solve on the move.”

The Marines divided into 12 teams of five and rotated through the different obstacles, each of which required critical thinking and problem-solving skills to maneuver. Each station of the LRC consists of its own rules and objectives. Red surfaces can’t be touched, only the materials provided can be used, and all Marines have to make it through the obstacle safely. The teams had to complete each station in less than 15 minutes.

At each obstacle, a different Marine was given an opportunity to lead by becoming the fire team leader for the group. That Marine’s responsibility was to form a plan and organize and direct the Marines on hand to solve the obstacle in the time allotted. It’s a parallel for the objective of Marine Corps leadership, which is to develop the leadership qualities of Marines to enable them to progressively assume greater responsibilities. Regardless of rank, every Marine must be prepared to lead.

“I gained a lot of experience about critical thinking that I wouldn’t usually get from my day-to-day work,” said Corporal Arthur Lesso, a metal worker with 2nd AA Bn. “I most definitely would do it again. It helps leaders and people who

wouldn’t be leaders to flex that muscle and just figure out a problem that doesn’t have an easy solution.”

The battalion participated in the LRC as part of its “Back in the Saddle” (BITS) training, which is intended to help Marines refocus after the holiday season and prepare for the year ahead.

Cpl Karina Lopezmata, USMC

## Act of Kindness: 3rd MLG Leader Demonstrates Spirit of Giving

“I knew I was going to give it away,” said Gunnery Sergeant Malina Shippen about the prize she won during the 3rd Marine Logistics Group Jingle Bell Fun Run and Games held at Camp Kinser, Marine Corps Base Camp Smedley D. Butler, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 6, 2019.

The annual event is held to raise the morale of the MLG’s Marines and Sailors during the holiday season. Shippen, a supply operations chief with Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 35, 3rd MLG, joined 40 others in a game of “Rock, Paper, Scissors” in hopes of winning a \$1,000 voucher from Delta Airlines.

Shippen eventually found herself winning the final round against Private First Class Leidy Becerra. However, Shippen didn’t walk away with the prize. Immediately after winning, she selflessly



CPL KARINA LOPEZMATA, USMC

Marines with 2nd AA Bn, 2ndMarDiv, work together on an obstacle at the new LRC on MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., Jan. 7. More than 60 Marines from the battalion maneuvered through four different obstacles, each requiring critical thinking and problem-solving skills to maneuver.





PFC COURTNEY ROBERTSON, USMC

GySgt Malina Shippen, left, and PFC Leidy Becerra, compete against each other in a blindfolded game of “Rock, Paper, Scissors” during the Jingle Bell Fun Run and Games at Camp Kinser, MCB Camp Butler, Okinawa, Japan, Dec. 6, 2019. After Shippen won a \$1,000 airline voucher, she gave it to Becerra to enable the young Marine to visit her family for the holidays.

gave her prize to Becerra.

“I was talking to her in between rounds, and she was just so happy and giddy,” recalled Shippen. “I asked her if she was going to go home this year for the holidays and she said, ‘No, I’m going to go home if I get the ticket!’ She was just so excited. I knew then I was going to give it to her if I won.”

Shippen, who has been in the Marine Corps for 18 years, emphasized her concern

for Marines during the holiday season and understands the disappointment that comes when family traditions are broken.

“When [junior Marines] get to their [first] duty station and they don’t know if they can go back home to those traditions, I’m sure they miss it,” she said. “I know it hurts them.”

She expressed her own personal experiences of missing out on traditions with her own family in the past. After seeing

her mother give her prize away, Shippen’s 11-year-old daughter followed her example and gave her collection of dolls away to children in need.

Shippen says she believes in spreading joy and looking out for those around her, especially during the holiday season. When Shippen gave her voucher to Becerra, Delta Airlines found her act of kindness so heartwarming that they presented her with a \$500 voucher.

“What goes around, comes around,” said Shippen. “That’s the magic to it ... once you take that extra step and extra effort to do something for someone else, it truly changes you as a person.”

PFC Courtney Robertson, USMC



## Crazy Caption Contest

### Winner



SA ANGEL JASKULOSKI, USN

“Would you like a Band-Aid or duct tape?”

Submitted by:  
Peter P. Joulis  
South San Francisco, Calif.

### This Month’s Photo



SGT. ALLISON LOTZ, USMC

(Caption) \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

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



SGT MARIA NOYOLA, USMC



Above: A power line Marine with VMFA-232 marshals an F/A-18C Hornet onto the flight line during a MAG-11 training exercise at MCAS Miramar, Calif., Feb. 1, 2019. (Photo by Cpl Nadia Stark, USMC)

Left: Cpl Bryce W. Potter, left, and Cpl Charles A. Hutchinson Jr., fixed-wing aircraft mechanics with VMFA-232, conduct crew supervisor pass-down during a shift changeover as part of Exercise Red Flag-Alaska at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, Oct. 9, 2018.

# “FIX, FLY, FIGHT”

## During Time of Transition, VMFA-232 Maintainers Keep F/A-18 Mission Ready

By Sara W. Bock

**W**hen Major Patrick Mullen pulls on his G-suit and dons his helmet and oxygen mask before climbing into the cockpit of an F/A-18C Hornet to prepare for takeoff, he does so with the utmost confidence that the aircraft is ready for a safe flight. He credits the often-unsung heroes of Marine aviation—aircraft maintainers—for allowing him to focus fully on the mission at hand.

Whether there’s a routine training flight or a combat sortie ahead of him, Mullen says he’s 100 percent comfortable signing for an aircraft that the maintenance department has declared “good to go.”

Aircraft maintenance, primarily a behind-the-scenes effort, requires in-depth systems knowledge and meticulous attention to detail and is the linchpin of the 3rd Marine Aircraft

Wing’s straightforward motto: “Fix, Fly, Fight.”

The venerable legacy Hornet, now an out-of-production aircraft slated to be replaced fleet-wide by the fifth-generation F-35B/C Lightning II over the next decade, presents a number of maintenance challenges for the Marines tasked with keeping them in the air. But Mullen says he’s “blown away” by the ability of the enlisted maintainers, from



LCpl Andrew Demars, an airframe mechanic with the "Red Devils," works on an F/A-18C Hornet during scheduled phase maintenance during a UDP at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, in June 2017. When aircraft go through phase maintenance, mechanics are able to perform in-depth maintenance to enhance the welfare of the aircraft.



LCPL MASON ROY, USMC



SARA W. BOCK

**Left: Cpl Spencer Ritchie, left, and Cpl Tyler Guy, electrical systems technicians with VMFA-232, test the electrical system of an F/A-18 outside the squadron's hangar at MCAS Miramar, Calif., Nov. 22, 2019.**

the youngest Marines to the most senior, to troubleshoot and fix even the most complex of issues. They are, he says, the greatest asset to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 232, one of four active component F/A-18 squadrons that belong to Marine Aircraft Group 11, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

“At the end of the day, even though parts and everything else can be limited, the resource that is absolutely irreplaceable and is the most valuable thing is the Marines downstairs,” said Mullen of the maintainers, who specialize in a wide range of subfields like avionics and ordnance.

As the quality assurance officer for VMFA-232, Mullen spends his non-flying hours working his ground





Left: An F/A-18C Hornet with VMFA-232 flies in a formation over Southern California, May 24, 2018. The Red Devils are proud of their distinction as the Corps' oldest active fighter squadron.



SARA W. BOCK



SARA W. BOCK

Above: GySgt Brandon McDowell, VMFA-232 power line chief, secures a panel on an F/A-18C on the flight line at MCAS Miramar, Calif., Nov. 22, 2019.

Left: Maj Patrick Mullen, an F/A-18 pilot and the quality assurance officer for VMFA-232, says that working in the maintenance department has given him a greater appreciation for the Marines who work behind the scenes to keep the squadron's Hornets flying.

job—standard practice for Marine aviators—in the San Diego-based squadron's maintenance department, which occupies the ground floor of a sizable hangar on the flight line at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif. While his counterparts occupy various billets in other departments, such as operations or safety, Mullen's position has provided him with a better understanding of the crucial role of maintenance to the squadron's operational readiness, as well as the strenuous work it entails. The seasoned pilot says he feels more confident than ever in the abilities of the approximately 200 Marines who are responsible for keeping the squadron's aging airframes mission capable.

Having functioning aircraft is not only essential to the mission of the F/A-18 platform of providing supporting arms coordination, conducting reconnaissance and destroying surface targets and enemy aircraft, but also to keeping up both the skill currency of the pilots and the overall morale within the squadron itself.

The oldest active fighter squadron

in the Marine Corps, VMFA-232, better known as the "Red Devils," transitioned from the F-4 Phantom to the F/A-18 Hornet in 1989, and in 2010, the Red Devils were the first F/A-18 squadron to be land-based in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. According to the 2019 Marine Corps Aviation Plan, the squadron is scheduled to be the last of

VMFA-232 maintainers conduct a preflight function check of an F/A-18C Hornet at MCAS Miramar, Calif., Feb. 1, 2019.



CPL NADIA STARK, USMC

the active component Hornet squadrons to transition to the F-35 beginning in fiscal year 2028.

As he sat down in the squadron's hangar with *Leatherneck* in November 2019, power line chief Gunnery Sergeant Brandon McDowell pointed to a wooden plaque on the wall bearing the inscription "VMFA-232: First to Fight, Last to Leave."

"We take pride in that," said McDowell of the squadron's motto. "It's fitting that we'll be the last to transition."

And while some might presume that

being tasked with maintaining older aircraft that have met or exceeded their intended service life—which is measured in flight hours—is particularly challenging, McDowell sees it differently.

"When you think about it, how old they are, that means they're reliable," he said of the Hornets, some of which have been flying for 30 years. "Because it's been around for so long, there's Marines that have worked on this aircraft that have seen it all. It's very rare that a new challenge appears. You can quickly train your junior Marines if they haven't

seen it yet, and because [the aircraft] are older, you'll get different challenges more frequently."

The frequency in which repairs are needed on the aircraft, added McDowell, gives newer maintainers a considerable amount of experience over a short period of time. It's a manifestation of the "training is continuous" philosophy the Deputy Commandant for Aviation, Lieutenant General Steven R. Rudder, emphasized in the Corps' most recent aviation plan.

"Even as a gunnery sergeant, I'm still learning new things every day," said McDowell. "They're constantly updating publications and making things more efficient."

During his time as an F/A-18 maintainer, McDowell has seen numerous changes in maintenance "best practices" and the elimination of redundancies in standard procedures.

New maintainers leave the schoolhouse and arrive at their first fleet squadron with a basic knowledge of both general and F/A-18-specific maintenance, but McDowell emphasizes that the "on-the-job" training they receive once they arrive at the squadron is crucial and, he says, it "never stops."

"There are various billets within

**Sgt Zachary Jackson, an airframe mechanic with VMFA-232, conducts maintenance on an F/A-18C Hornet during a UDP at MCAS Iwakuni, Japan, in June 2017.**



LCPL MASON ROY, USMC



the squadron and within the [military occupational specialty], and you'll be trained for the next billet in whatever you're doing," McDowell said.

With billets that range from equipment technicians and airframe mechanics to avionics technicians and seat shop Marines, who conduct daily inspections and repairs of the fighter jet's ejection seats, the maintenance department presents a management challenge for those who occupy its leadership positions.

"It can be done effectively just by knowing what capabilities you have in each shop at any given time based on personnel and qualifications, and then if you can effectively manage those and effectively allocate and prioritize them, it can be infinitely more effective," said Mullen. "The end goal is to have those airplanes flying as much as possible and as effectively as possible."

Each day the squadron's maintenance department starts with a meeting led by maintenance control that brings together leaders from all of the different divisions or specialties. On the agenda are the priorities for that specific day, as well as each division's "plan of attack," said Mullen. Each division then gets to work on executing those daily priorities.

"If you walk downstairs, it can seem kind of chaotic because you have Marines, they're all doing very different jobs, but all driving towards that same goal of getting the airplanes ready," Mullen said.



SARA W. BOCK



SARA W. BOCK

**Above: Cpl Tyler Guy, an electrical systems technician with VMFA-232, performs routine checks on an aircraft's systems at MCAS Miramar, Calif., Nov. 22, 2019.**

**Left: Cpl Spencer Ritchie works to ensure that an F/A-18C Hornet has a fully functioning electrical system before its next scheduled flight.**

It's all about balancing both short-term and long-range plans with the inevitable reaction to unexpected issues as they arise, he added.

"With older airplanes sometimes your plans can kind of get dashed at the last minute, but in general, we always have a plan of attack and we're always reviewing it and assessing it," said Mullen.

Typically the squadron runs two 10-hour maintenance shifts each day, with occasional adjustments to 24-hour around-the-clock maintenance if the unit is gearing up for a training event, operation or deployment.

**A maintainer with VMFA-232 fastens panels on an F/A-18C Hornet prior to a February 2019 training exercise at MCAS Miramar, Calif.**



CPL NADIA STARK, USMC

In September 2019, the Red Devils returned to MCAS Miramar after participating in a six-month unit deployment program (UDP) in Japan. Whether deployed aboard a carrier or land-based, McDowell says that from a maintenance perspective, the work is no different from being at home.

“We train like we fight. It really doesn’t matter where we go. We operate the same,” said McDowell. “It was a successful deployment, we got to do various training with different countries, and we actually made it back on schedule. All of our aircraft made it back exactly when they were supposed to—no issues. [The Marines] are just dedicated to that type of maintenance.”

Mullen agreed, saying that other than adjusting to the demands and challenges associated with being away from home, the actual work the maintainers conduct while deployed remains the same.

“Overall from a maintenance perspective, we just pick up, move, and essentially execute the same tasks elsewhere that we do here,” said Mullen.

Whether forward deployed or back at MCAS Miramar, safety is of the utmost concern, said both Mullen and McDowell. And while the safety of the pilots who fly the aircraft is undoubtedly the overarching goal of maintenance, the safety of the maintainers themselves is equally vital.

While he wasn’t permitted to disclose the exact ratio of maintenance man-

hours to flight hours, Mullen emphasized that a full shift of maintenance far exceeds the number of hours the aircraft actually spend in flight.

“That is a huge thing that’s a concern,” said Mullen. “Really my primary role as the quality assurance officer is making sure that maintenance is done safely.”

As a precaution against injuries, maintainers are required to wear cranial helmets when near the aircraft, as well



**LCpl Jesse Schmitt, a power line mechanic with VMFA-232, signals to an F/A-18C Hornet pilot that he is clear to start his engines at Japan Air Self-Defense Force Hyakuri Air Base in July 2017. (Photo by LCpl Mason Roy, USMC)**



**LCpl Dustin Delgado, a fixed-wing aircraft mechanic with VMFA-232, prepares to launch an F/A-18C Hornet during preflight checks at Anderson AFB, Guam, June 19, 2019. VMFA-232 increases operational readiness by training in new environments through the Aviation Training Relocation Program.**



LCPL JACKSON RICKER, USMC

as proper hearing protection.

“At the end of a 10-hour shift, we can all forget those things. We always have Marines that are walking around making sure that stuff is done right,” said Mullen. “Similar to aviation, we follow procedures, we follow checklists ... to make sure to keep you on track maybe when you’re tired or you’ve been doing things for a long time, to make sure that you are doing things right and by the book and safely.”

Within the department, Marines selected for the position of Collateral Duty Inspector (CDI) observe and oversee all maintenance and are responsible for “signing off” on the aircraft after the work is complete. Many are young Marines who have only been in the Corps for a few years, said Mullen, who is particularly impressed by their capacity to take on a substantial amount of responsibility.

As Marine aviation continues to move toward modernization while

remaining ready to support the warfighter in every clime and place, the 2019 Aviation Plan underscores “supporting the maintainer” as one of the Deputy Commandant for Aviation’s key priorities.

“Strong maintenance departments are able to generate materially sound, healthy aircraft in the right numbers to enable our aircrews to be successful in training and in combat, and set conditions for ‘operations and maintenance balance,’ ” reads the Aviation Plan. “Maintenance departments serve as the ‘center of gravity’ of our flying squadrons and maintenance capacity ultimately determines our ability to provide sustainable readiness in support of operational requirements.”

Mullen has seen this increased emphasis on maintenance support in action at VMFA-232.

“That has been a focal point since I got to this unit,” Mullen said, adding that that squadron’s commanding

officer, Lieutenant Colonel Mark Bortnem, has made it very clear that the maintainers are the squadron’s most important resource and should be prioritized as such.

With a planned “sunset” of 2030, the F/A-18—considered to be the Corps’ primary bridging platform to the F-35B/C—will continue to be an essential part of Marine aviation for the next decade.

And while the transition will mean the eventual end of the Hornet community in the Marine Corps, McDowell says he and the other maintainers are just focused on the day-to-day and doing their job to the best of their ability. Some will transition to the F-35 in the coming years, while others may end up working on other platforms.

“When we join, we’re first told ‘needs of the Marine Corps,’ ” McDowell said when asked about the future. “We’ll be placed wherever is best for the Marine Corps.”

Shown here at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, during their seven-month deployment in late 2018, 2nd Plt, Co G, 2nd Bn, 25th Marines, was made up of reservists from several towns in New Jersey. (Photo courtesy of SSgt Samuel L. Mincey, USMC)



# In the Fight at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan

By Dick Camp

In the spring of 2017, at the request of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), approximately 300 Marines and Sailors from the II Marine Expeditionary Force were deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Designated Task Force Southwest (TFSW), the force was assigned to train and advise soldiers of the Afghan National Army's 215th Corps and the 505th Zone National Police in support of the NATO-led Resolute Support mission.

In September 2018, "Golf" Company, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment joined Task Force Southwest for a seven-month deployment. The company's mission was to provide security for the American compound inside Camp Shorab, formerly known as Camp Bastion.

Camp Bastion was previously attacked in March 2012. In the hour before then-Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta was due to arrive, a suicide bomber drove a vehicle through an outer fence in the hopes

of attacking the senior American official. Two generals were in the immediate vicinity but were able to escape the bomber.

In September 2012, 15 heavily armed Taliban insurgents breached the eastern perimeter, split into three teams and commenced a coordinated attack on the airfield. The resulting friendly casualties and damage included two Marines killed in action—including a squadron commander—and eight U.S. personnel wounded in action. Six VMA-211 AV-8B Harriers were destroyed and two were severely damaged. A C-130E was severely damaged, four aircraft received minor damage, three fuel bladders were destroyed and several aircraft hangars were either destroyed or damaged. Fourteen attackers were killed and one was captured.

In the pre-dawn darkness of March 1, 2019, two dozen shadowy Taliban fighters crept toward the fences that marked the western perimeter of the Afghan National Army's 215th Maiwand Corps' sprawling

Shorab Air base. The base previously known as BLS (Bastion, Leatherneck, Shorab), covered approximately 40 square miles, and at one time could accommodate 30,000 personnel. The perimeter of the Shorab complex was composed of approximately 25 miles of fence line loosely guarded by Afghan soldiers after the withdrawal of the last U.S. Marines in 2014.

Scaling collapsible ladders placed against two sets of fences, one group of Taliban was able to enter the base despite the presence of Afghan guards responsible for the base's security. Another group of fighters gained entry by riding inside a sewage tanker truck, which was not inspected as it entered the base. The Taliban proceeded to objectives provided by insiders—an Afghan lieutenant colonel, who was killed during the attack, and a sergeant major—according to Afghan and American military intelligence officers. An Afghan Army officer said it was almost impossible for anyone to enter





COURTESY OF SSGT SAMUEL L. MINCEY, USMC

**Above: The HESCO barrier walls surrounding the Marine compound were more than 8-foot high and provided protection from direct fire.**

the camp without support from elements inside the compound. Staff Sergeant Sam Mincey, Platoon Sergeant, 2nd Platoon, Co G, was convinced that intelligence was provided to the Taliban by base garbage collectors, explaining, “My men caught two of them and turned them over to the ANA [Afghan National Army].”

Reports indicated that the Taliban took several Afghan soldiers hostage, forcing them to guide the militants toward the ANA operations center where a few American special forces soldiers were working in support of ANA operations. The reports also suggested that the Taliban had deliberately planned the attack for this particular night, because the ANA was celebrating their armed forces day, and most were preoccupied throughout the base. Additionally, the weather was exceptionally poor, and high winds and rain limited intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) systems and the effectiveness of force protection measures. It was also reported that the high-tech perimeter defenses had not been adequately maintained.

In an apparent diversion, the Taliban launched a separate attack on Forward

Operating Base Hamidullah, formerly Camp Nalay, a Marine base 40 miles away in the Sangin District. That attack was quickly repelled.

### **And Then the Killing Began**

As the firing started, the Afghan garrison commander and his driver were among the first to fall when they drove into an ambush. Diners in the mess hall were hacked with knives and a suicide bomber added to the death toll. Members of the Helmand Province council put the death toll at 40 Afghan soldiers. “A Taliban commander was quoted as saying, “It is the same military base that we attacked in 2012 with a plan to kill Prince Harry. In recent months we provided special training to these attackers and arranged a visit to the base several times.”

As the Taliban attack began, Afghan soldiers in a guard tower spotted the intruders as they headed for the small, fortified Marine compound in the middle of the camp. Task Force Southwest sentries from Co G, 2nd Bn, 25th Marines immediately took the invaders under fire and repelled the attack.



COURTESY OF 1STSGT DON CARNEY, USMC

**Capt John M. Murtagh**

### **Co G, 2nd Bn, 25th Marines**

The 165-man Co G, under the command of Captain John M. Murtagh, was made up of reservists from several communities in New Jersey. “The majority of the men were all career reservists,” Murtagh explained. “A handful of men had been on active

**A view of the interior of the Marine compound at Camp Bastion. Note the HESCO barriers in the background.**



duty, including the executive officer and the company gunnery sergeant, but, by and large, it was a company of reservists.”

Murtagh said, “Deployment had always been dangled in front of us. Every year during our two weeks of training, the rumor mill would commence. Then, starting in 2016, the rumors became more real. In September 2017, I received a phone call from my battalion commander indicating that G Co was going to deploy. Eight months later, the company gunnery sergeant and I accompanied Brigadier General Dale Alford and Colonel Blair Sokol on a predeployment site survey to Afghanistan, where we met the unit we were going to relieve. We got a real sense of what the company was going to be doing.”

In July, the company was mobilized and began a very compressed three-month deployment work up schedule at Camp Lejeune. “For the Marines, [mobilization] was one of those things that they’d hoped for, particularly the reserves,” Murtagh

said. Finally, in September 2018, Co G deployed to Helmand Province.

“We flew directly into the largely abandoned and barren Camp Bastion/Shorab airfield, which we quickly nicknamed ‘Zombie Land,’ ” Murtagh said. “The sun was glaring and it was at least 100 degrees. The gravity of the situation hit me, ‘Now I’m responsible for providing security of the camp, the airfield when flights came in, and being the Guardian Angel security for the Special Forces adviser team.’ ”

The “camp” was the small Task Force Southwest compound that contained the task force operations building, living quarters and all of the various shops connected with vehicle and equipment maintenance and was located in one small corner within the huge Shorab military base. Co G was not responsible for the entire base, only the security of the inner compound walls, which were divided into platoon sectors. The larger outer perimeter was the responsibility of the Afghans.

### **Taliban Attack**

First Sergeant Don Carney learned of the attack when the alarm was sounded. He was awakened to a “Fortress” announcement over the PA system, indicating that all available security forces were required to secure the walls to protect against an imminent attack. “I knew the way it was announced that this was no drill. I geared up and ran to the BDOC [Base Defense Operations Center].”

Capt Murtagh and Gunnery Sergeant Michael A. Capriglione were also asleep in their rooms in the back of the company office when the attack began. Capriglione recalled, “The watch officer came over, knocked on the door, and announced, ‘Sir, we have a Fortress.’ Quite honestly, it didn’t quite register. In my mind, I thought maybe the Afghanistan guard towers had taken some potshots, some random incoming fire, so I took time to get fully dressed. As I stepped out of my quarters, one of my radio operators came bursting in through the back door, out of





COURTESY OF SSGT SAMUEL L. MINCEY, USMC



breath. I asked what was going on, and as he responded, I realized there was something going on more than just a few shots.” Murtagh and Capriglione ran to the BDOC, which was next door. “As I left the building, I could hear all the gunfire,” Capriglione recalled.

The BDOC was where the task force’s senior officers—BGen Alford, commander, Col Sokol, deputy commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Dan Macsary, operations officer—were assembled to assess the threat.

Murtagh recalled, “As soon as I got inside the ops center, I could see all the various camera systems. The surveillance cameras assisted us in identifying targets. We’d call out targets to the nearest friendly

unit on the wall, figure out who was where and confirm it was the enemy. It was clear that the [threat] was very serious. It took us a little time to identify what the bad guys looked like—backpacks, beards, a mix of knock off American and Afghan uniforms, sneakers—all the marks of the Taliban. My job became identifying the Taliban and figure out how to kill them.”

SSgt Sam Mincey, platoon sergeant, 2ndPlt, recounted, “Lieutenant [Brenden] Dougherty and I got to bed about 0130 and the Taliban attack kicked off between 0230 and 0240. We heard Captain Recordo Demetrious yell, ‘We’re being attacked! We’re being attacked!’ ”

Sergeant Anthony Gabriel, 1st squad leader, recalled, “Corporal Derek Lauria started screaming ‘Fortress.’ I was just waking up thinking, ‘there’s no f-ing way. This is just one of those drills. And all of a sudden, I heard rounds going off. After all those years of training, this is for real! We went to our positions on the west wall, just like we practiced.’ ”

Sergeant Brian Bloete, 3rd squad leader, also took a minute to realize the reality of the situation. “I heard a burst of machine-gun fire, which was not totally unknown, but this sounded different. I lay there for a second and then I heard the loudspeaker come on with the code for ‘get on the wall.’ ” He roused his men who grabbed their weapons and equipment and ran out to the platoon sector. “The gunfire got louder and louder and we could see tracer rounds fill the sky. We realized pretty quickly that this was the real deal ... it was the first time for us.”

“My guys manned the walls within five



1STSGT DON CARNEY, USMC

**SSgt Michael A. Capriglione uses advanced technology on a patrol in an EOD vehicle near Camp Shorab, Afghanistan.**



minutes of the alert,” Mincey said. “We had rehearsed the drill every month, so the men knew what to do ... they started calling out what they were seeing. Corporal George Torres was the first Marine to learn what was going on. He and four other Marines were in the ANA perimeter, where they had been providing security for the advisors. He told me that he saw a bunch of ANA running and the next thing he knew, someone was shooting at the building he was in.”

### The Firing Line

Co G's perimeter was organized into platoon sectors, reinforced with gun trucks mounting .50-caliber and M60 machine guns. “We felt it would take a lot to get through our perimeter,” Murtagh remarked.

Second Plt's “L” shaped perimeter was made of 4-foot high HESCO barriers stacked on top of each other. It was located on the western wall facing the entrance to the Afghan base. “We were receiving a lot of fire,” Bloete recalled, “but at the time, I couldn't tell whether it was directly at us or ricochets. It was dark and hard to see who was shooting at us. We wanted to shoot but we didn't know who was who, so as badly as we wanted to shoot, we didn't want to shoot the wrong person.”



**A Rocket Propelled Grenade hole in the CONEX box used as living quarters for contract workers at Camp Shorab.**

COURTESY OF SSGT SAMUEL L. MINCEY, USMC

At one point, Carney rushed out to the western perimeter where Post 6, 7, and 8 were taking heavy, steady fire. Carney went directly to Post 8, which was manned by Corporal Nicholas Williams, who was

armed with a 240G machine gun. “I was always concerned about this position because the Afghan base was right next door and had a road that came about 75 meters from our guard post,” Carney explained. “Using our AN/PEQ16s, NVGs and AN/PAS-28s, we were able to observe the Taliban engaging [us] with small arms fire from about 200 meters from our position. I saw one Taliban with an RPG on his shoulder.”

Carney described the Taliban as wearing a mixture of old U.S. Army patterned uniforms and civilian clothing. Murtagh thought they wore “knock off” Afghan uniforms. “They were trying to blend in, but they were clearly enemy because of their long hair and beards, all the marks of the Taliban.”

“An RPG exploded a short distance from our position,” Carney recalled. “There were rounds flying every which way, maybe even some of the ANA's. We heard many loud explosions on the Afghan base itself, within 200 meters from our position. It was crazy for a while.” Carney remained on the perimeter for several hours, relaying information to Murtagh at the BDOC and directing the fire of the men on the wall.

The Taliban “set fire to one of the trucks in the motor pool to use as cover,” Mincey



COURTESY OF SGT BRIAN BLOETE, USMC

**A Marine advisor, left, and Sgt Brian E. Bloete, right, pose in front of a heavily damaged building in the ANA area of Camp Bastion.**



said. The subterfuge didn't work. "I could see the Taliban running from building to building. We were engaging them and they were shooting back with small arms fire, RPGs and mortars. A 203 round [40 mm grenade] came over the wall, hit a CONEX box, and started a fire. I ran over with a couple of men and at that time I realized civilian contractors were still in the CONEX boxes [temporary housing]. We got the civilians out and took them to the chow hall area for safety. They knew the protocol 'Fortress' but chose not to go."

"The Taliban were shooting directly at us," Bloete said. "We could see their muzzle flashes, bullets coming right at us, coming right past our heads. It's a different sound when the bullets are coming directly at us. One or two suicide vests went off in front of us and then later in the day, they shot four 203 rounds from a grenade launcher that went over an interior wall and just missed two of our Marines. There were four back-to-back explosions from a 40 mm grenade launcher. The Taliban had everything ... small arms, machine guns, handheld grenades, grenade launchers, RPGs, suicide vests ... they were very well-armed, very well-equipped.

"The Marines responded exactly how you'd want them to do in an attack," Bloete said proudly. "It was something we had rehearsed before. There was no confusion. During one of our rehearsals, we started thinking about ways to improve, how we can get better. One thing we did was make range cards to better communicate among the squads and platoon. We identified buildings, roads, distances between things, so the whole platoon knew when I said Building A, they knew which building we were talking about. So, by the time the attack happened, everyone knew what we were talking about—a road, how far it was, etc."

Bloete thought the individual actions of his men were incredible that day. "We're reservists. In my squad, I work in finance and wear a suit and tie to work. There was also a teacher, an electrician, a college student, men from many vocations. I don't think anyone could tell the difference that we were coming from civilian jobs versus being full-time Marines. My guys were older, more mature. I was 30, and the youngest man was 20. The rest of the squad was between 20 and 26. This was my first deployment as well as the rest of the squad."

Gabriel's squad came under fire but did not return fire immediately. "The ROEs [Rules of Engagement] prevented us from firing at first because of the danger of shooting the ANA, especially if the Taliban wasn't shooting at us. It was hard



COURTESY OF SSGT SAMUEL L. MINCEY, USMC

**Bomb damage inside some of the buildings on Camp Shorab was extensive. Task Force Southwest brought in an air strike to assist the Afghan Army in eliminating Taliban attackers.**

telling who was who in the dark. We started returning fire when they started shooting at us. We now had positive identification and it was full go! We took small arms fire and then my guys started to suffer the effects of gas, coughing and eyes watering, which I thought may have been CS. I took my guys off that portion of the wall until the gas dissipated."

"There was a PTDS [Persistent Threat Detection System] on our section of the wall," Bloete said. PTDS is a large helium-filled lighter than air system that provides long-range intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and communication system. "The tether was 30 yards from me, and as they started raising it up [it had been lowered because of the bad weather], the

Taliban started shooting at it," Mincey recalled. "We were getting ricochets off the PTDS because it was made of metal."

Murtagh commented, "My Marines were fully engaged—rounds pinging off the walls, RPGs flying overhead—returning fire to suppress the enemy, definitely bringing the full weight of our weapons to bear ... it wasn't quite a fair fight, that's for sure!"

According to Murtagh, some of the Taliban entered a nearby building as the day wore on. "A couple Taliban ended up in a warehouse immediately adjacent to our base within 100 meters of our perimeter wall. The Afghan Army went in to get them for the rest of the day and part of the next. It stayed interesting for





1STSGT DON CARNEY, USMC

**1stSgt Don Carney, left, and SSgt Sam Mincey were two of the many Marines of Co G, 2/25 who helped defend Camp Shorab against the attack by Taliban forces in March 2019.**

at one corner of the base. “We spotted several Taliban and brought in fixed-wing, and dropped three 500-pound bombs within 100 meters of our perimeter,” BGen Alford explained. “We had the Marines on the perimeter get in their bunkers before the airstrike, to make sure our men weren’t hurt.” Carney remarked that the bombs were close to Post 8. “The Marines just hunkered down,” he said. “The bombs took out the Taliban’s last position.”

After the fighting ceased, Carney noted that the area was pretty well torn up but still standing. Bloete said, “There was wreckage everywhere. On the Afghan side of the base there [were] bullet holes all over, buildings were shot up, exploded, knocked down—some of which were taken out by bombs. Buildings and window frames were pockmarked with bullet holes.”

According to the Afghan Ministry of Defense, 23 security forces were killed and 15 were injured. 20 insurgents were killed. Major Williamson, the task force operations officer, wasn’t certain of the numbers of enemy killed. “We know it was at least 16, but we have a lot of uncertainty because some of the attackers were wearing ANA uniforms and were almost certainly members of the ANA.” Damage to the Marine compound was minimal, and no U.S. personnel were injured.

Carney proudly said, “The Marines did an outstanding job. I was very proud of them ... and the absolutely best part was to come out with no casualties.” BGen Alford praised the company’s reaction, remarking, “They did a great job!”

“The fighting was something you think about from the first day at boot camp, Infantry School—every day you’re in the Marines you think about preparing yourself what if you’re in combat. It was fortunate for us that no one was hurt. Because of that, we have a good memory of the deployment—none of us were hurt, our base was intact or compromised, and every single Taliban was dead,” said Bloete smiling.

*Author’s bio: Dick Camp, a retired Marine colonel, is the former director of operations for the National Museum of the Marine Corps, former deputy director and director (acting) of the Marine Corps History Division and a prolific author. He is a frequent contributor to Leatherneck.*

a while. The attack was on March 1 but trailed into the 2nd before the Afghans finally got them out. The warehouse kind of became symbolic of the whole battle.”

News reports said the intense fight lasted about 49 hours before Afghan soldiers were able to eliminate all the Taliban insurgents. The bulk of the fighting was condensed to a shorter time

period. “The heaviest fire lasted 13 hours, and the rest of the time was when the ANA was clearing the motor pool building where five or six Taliban were holed up. We waited for the ANA to clear the building, which took almost a full day,” according to Capriglione.

It was reported that some of the attackers hid behind and inside armored vehicles



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### DETAILS:

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-Must include contact information: grade, name, unit, SNOIC/OIC, e-mail and phone number

-Submit electronically in Microsoft Word Format to [leatherneck@mca-marines.org](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org)

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*Sponsored By Major Rick Stewart. USMC (Ret)*

# Books Reviewed

**THE REMAINS OF THE CORPS: Volume I: Ivy & The Crossing: The Illustrated Novel.** By Will Remain. Illustrated by Tara Kaz. Published by EG&A Publishing. 368 pages. The book is available through [www.remainsofthecorps.com](http://www.remainsofthecorps.com).

All devoted authors of consequence covet the imprimatur stamp of approval for his or her achievement more than reaching the peak of the best-seller list or realizing large movie contract rewards. Imagine when the paragon of military matters, General David H. Berger, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, sent an unexpected letter of approbation to first-time novelist Thomas W. Hebert (Will Remain is a pen name), a second generation Marine, for his minor masterpiece, “The Remains of the Corps: Volume I: Ivy & the Crossing: The Illustrated Novel.” REMAIN is an anagram for Marine.

Fiction, spanning most of the 20th century, 1913 to 1978, Volume I depicts the history of three generations of a United States Marine Corps family that had its birth roots in Worcester, Mass., and its college roots at Harvard in Cambridge.

While his forefathers fought bravely, often heroically, in the Great War, World War II, Korea, and in other war-stressed areas in the world, “... The skill, strength, endurance, and spirit my progenitors exhibited are anything but make believe,” the fictional author says. Their stories, five additional volumes of “The Remains of the Corps” (1913-1917) are on their way. Volume II, “France: Belleau Wood and Beyond” (1917-1919); Volume III, “Between the Wars” (1919-1941); Volume IV, “World War II (1941-1945); Volume V, “Post-WW II-Korea (1946-1953); and Volume VI, “Post-Korea (1954-1975). Hebert adds, “My collateral view of many of the Remain family members takes the reader inside the Corps, both in peacetime and in war, including adventures in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic.”

Appreciative of having received Volume I, “Ivy & the Crossing,” General Berger wrote, “The Remains of the Corps’ is a unique and compelling look at the Marines in World War I. It is clear that you put a significant amount of effort into creating believable characters and scenarios and

truly bringing each one to life. Your book is a great addition to our library at the Home of the Commandants. Many thanks for your service to the Corps and our country ... Semper Fidelis.”

Any reviewer of books assigned to Volume I, “Ivy,” any military historian, buff, or general reader, would agree. The general’s tribute is justified. Page after page, Hebert’s eloquence is riveting, so much so that the Remain family ingratiates itself in the subconscious, akin to a good television miniseries, that all the members become integral to our own family. In short, we’re all imprimaturs stamping approval of the Remains and grandson Will’s veracity of them.

Enhancing the author’s embracing narrative style is the use of illustrations, 134 of them in Volume I alone, every one intrinsic, nay, crucial, to the well-conceived storyline. Artist Tara Kaz, a graduate of the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, was

chosen after careful consideration of numerous graphic designers, painters, and illustrators.

“After putting my heart and soul into every page,” Tom admits, “I was searching for an artist who quietly and realistically could capture the heart and soul of each member of my family, the encompassing Marines, and main characters such as born-to-the-purple Lawrence Blakeslee and the beautiful KatyKay Mulcahy.”

Indeed, without a single photograph in the entire 368 page text, Tara Kaz captures them all, fictional enlisted men, noncommissioned officers, officers, cadets, places, etc., in a creative style of drawing commensurate with the best art in photography. “Tara breathes life into each of their stories with 53 drawings and 81 portraits. And by the time my six volumes are completed, she will have completed for ‘The Remains of the Corps,’ close to a thousand superb illustrations, each one deserving its own frame.”

Such respect for his artist, love of family, and enormous respect and admiration of the Corps deserves a further glimpse into the author, a man beyond the ordinary whose intuitive imagination adds to the dignity of our own humble lives. He has been referred to as a “literary blacksmith whose hammers, tongs, and

chisels, including a lengthy self-education in the literary arts, an intense passion, and a fierce persistence, are shaping the iron wrought by many years of extensive research.” So fittingly apropos.

The son of a Marine sergeant who served on Iwo Jima, Hebert was born in Springfield, Mass. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1968, and served in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971 as a first lieutenant. Upon leaving the Marine Corps, he obtained a master’s degree in professional accounting from the University of Hartford. He is a certified public accountant, with an avocation of researching and writing about military matters.

Don DeNevi

*Author’s bio: For more than 35 years, Don DeNevi has reviewed books for Leatherneck, in addition to writing more than 50 himself. Only recently has he begun writing military fiction, his first two efforts entitled, “Pacific Nocturne—Pavuvu Island, 1944, When a Multiple Murdering Marine Murdered His Own,” and its sequel, “The Guard House Murders—Camp Elliott, San Diego, 1944—Who’s Killing Young Marine Inmates?”*

**CRAIG & FRED: A Marine, A Stray Dog, and How They Rescued Each Other.** By Craig Grossi. Published by Speck. 288 pages. The book is available through [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

Sergeant Craig Grossi and his team were on a reconnaissance mission near Sangin, Afghanistan, along the Green Zone. Suddenly, they came upon a goofy looking young dog. Unlike the aggressive pack dogs they often encountered, this guy seemed approachable and not at all threatening. He looked much like a corgi, only larger. He was mostly white with a tan colored saddle marking across his back and tan markings over his head and cute floppy ears. After Craig petted him, one of the EOD guys said, “Looks like you made a friend,” but what Sgt Grossi overheard was, “Looks like a Fred.” The name stuck. From then on, they would forever be Craig and Fred.

After 9/11 Craig Grossi, a Virginia native, had enlisted in the Marine Corps through the delayed entry program. He earned his private first class stripe at boot camp. Grossi spent most of his first hitch working in corrections in Guantanamo, Cuba. By 2007, after he decided to reenlist,

[www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck](http://www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck)



he was assigned to special operations. Here he was introduced to the interesting field of Marine Corps intelligence. Trained as an interrogator, he eventually received orders for Afghanistan.

Sgt Grossi's charming book switches between his time in Afghanistan and the U.S. road trip he and Fred took years later. On their cross-country road trip Craig and Fred were joined by another veteran named Josh. In 2009, Josh, an Army veteran, had lost his right leg above the knee after his Stryker armored vehicle struck a roadside improvised explosive device.

Josh and Grossi met at school, and as veterans tend to do, instantly became friends.

Driving Grossi's 1988 Toyota Land Cruiser, the two veterans and their curious dog made countless friends throughout their travels. Speaking about how most Americans seem uncomfortable talking about the war, Craig recalled, "No one really knew how to ask me questions or what to say." When asked about their comical canine friend, Craig would also use the opportunity to unburden himself about his own battlefield experiences and recollections. Not only would this gain the guys a free drink or two, but it was a superb way to help them release some of their hard-won combat related stresses.

While viewing the mighty Colorado River and its massive canyon, Grossi thoughtfully recalled, "I could not help but feel insignificant. I thought about how all those layers in the canyon walls represented the passage of time—all ages that came before us and would come after us. ... Yet standing there with my dog and my friend—two beings I never would have met had my life gone another way—I was in awe of the profound unlikelihood and beauty of it all."

In Afghanistan he had been attached to a recon company as the team's interrogator. Fred soon became incorporated into the daily activities of the team. He served as a cheerful reminder that life could still be good. At first, Fred joined them on patrol, but they quickly learned that he might bark at inappropriate times; this, of course, would threaten the team's location. From then on, Fred stayed secure, back at the recon's fortified position.

In time, the unavoidable question of transporting Fred back to the United States came to the forefront. The military had a clear rule against service personnel acquiring little indigenous friends and other non-human companions. Grossi

understood that if he were discovered, Fred would be unceremoniously euthanized. However, a crafty plan soon took form. First, Fred would need to be smuggled on a helicopter. He'd then have to be kept hidden back at Camp Leatherneck until he could get papers and shots. Finally, Grossi would have to find some way to ship Fred home.

Fred was lucky; team members and friends helped conceal the furry contraband. Back home, Grossi's sister facilitated the needed paperwork. A friendly vet helped with the examination and shots and members of a civilian contractor outfit helped hide the dog on base. Once, when the station was being inspected by the big brass, a contractor led Fred around on a leash and pretended he was a bomb-sniffing dog. Finally Fred was successfully shipped home. Interestingly,

Fred arrived in the home of the brave, three months before Sgt Grossi returned.

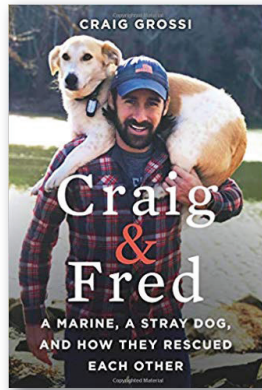
This charming book is well worth your time and interest. We see many veterans now successfully writing their personal

stories in an attempt to mitigate some of their post-traumatic stress symptoms. In this delightful book, we see how the two vets, and their loyal dog Fred, helped relieve their PTS symptoms in various ways. Like many veterans, big crowds, firecrackers and other loud noises often triggered the alarm reaction for Grossi. Even Fred displayed signs of post-traumatic stress. Once when a smoke alarm sounded, Craig needed to hold and comfort his shaken dog until Fred dropped off into peaceful slumber.

Sgt Grossi explains, "I always had the urge to pen something more personal. Maybe to make sense of what I'd been through. I had no idea how to even start putting into words the scope of the war, my war experiences in the Marines, or my time in Sangin. But an easy place to start was with Fred." By recounting Fred's story, the Marine helped himself and perhaps helped all of us to understand just what veterans routinely face.

Bob Loring

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



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# Dong Ha Mountain

Story and photos by MSgt Tom Bartlett, USMC

In the mud and the crud of the monsoon rain came a figure.

And out of the fog and the mist, walked a man.

As he walked, his feet “slished, slished” through the puddles. At other times his feet went “shlonk!” as the soles of his boots were gripped by ankle-deep mud.

As he came closer you could tell that he was wet, clear through to his dog tags. And he smiled ... .

It had been raining continuously for four days. Fog limited visibility. A breeze swept across the flat top of the mountain, carrying a chill. Men slid in the mud, making involuntary flanking movements while attempting to walk in straight lines.

Men on security had difficulty seeing those on adjoining posts because of the rain and fog.

But smiles come easily atop Dong Ha Mountain. Marine grunts and gunners

can grin in the mud and the chill. The mountain is high, but morale is higher. And they smile ... .

Providing security atop Dong Ha Mountain, which is also known as “Fire Support Base Fuller” is “Charlie” Squad, Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment.

The 3rd Marine Division will leave Vietnam and with it, 3/4. What makes 3/4 a little more “special” than other units





It would seem that President Nixon's Phase II troop redeployment of Marine units had saved one of the best for last—3/4 will be one of the last units of 3rdMarDiv to board ship and head for Okinawa.



**Above: Marines LCpl Robert S. Allen Jr. and LCpl Bev Dodson check the antennas atop Dong Ha Mountain. The communications network at the fire support base was of prime importance.**

**Left: A Marine CH-53 Sea Stallion delivers an externally loaded 105 mm howitzer to Dong Ha Mountain. All of the supplies were brought in by helicopter despite often poor weather conditions.**



**Above: Fire power was provided by the 105 mm howitzers of Battery H, 3/12, while they were stationed on the summit of Dong Ha Mountain.**

in the Division is that they were the first Marine ground unit deployed north of Da Nang.

The 4th Marines arrived at Chu Lai in May 1965, and the following month, 3/4 moved to the Hue-Phu Bai area, with 1/4 and 2/4 remaining at Chu Lai, patrolling outlying areas and providing security for the air base.

Not only was 3/4 the first unit north, but it would seem that President Nixon's Phase II troop redeployment of Marine units had saved one of the best for last—3/4 will be one of the last units of 3rdMarDiv to board ship and head for Okinawa.

"I'm damn glad to leave here for Oki," volunteered Private First Class Thomas E. Haskell of Charlie Squad.

“Me too,” echoed Lance Corporal Jack F. Cundiff. “I don’t mind Vietnam too much, but my folks are worried about my being here.”

“I can’t really say that I’m sorry to leave either,” said LCpl George N. Taylor.

PFC Abraham M. Mailings, an ammo humper with 81 mm mortars atop the mountain, looks forward to Okinawa and hot chow, showers and clean sheets.

LCpl Ronald E. Vasquez is the “old man” of C Squad. He’s 22 and the squad leader.

“We got the word in September that the Division was being redeployed,” Vasquez recalled. “It’s great that we’re going to Okinawa. Most of the squad has been in ’Nam from six to nine months and not all of it has been easy,” he explained.

Prior to their assignment atop Dong Ha Mountain, C Squad and Lima Co were

**Right: LCpl Mike Romanger, left, advises PFC Walter D. Ward where to set up his M60 machine gun as part of the nightly defense for the strategically important fire base.**



**When the weather clears, helicopters bring the mountain Marines chow, water and mail. This CH-53 Sea Stallion also ferried Marines back to the Dong Ha Combat Base.**



on an operation near the Demilitarized Zone, which lasted for 48 days. They were humping the slopes and crevices of Hill 950 near Khe Sanh, searching for enemy rocket sites.

“Contact was relatively light,” Vasquez recalled, “but the terrain was rugged.”

The battalion found large caches of rockets, mortars, grenades and assorted small arms ammunition in enemy bunkers which were destroyed by the sweeping Marines.

Following the month and a half in the bush, they were assigned to the Vandegrift Combat Base where they provided security and patrolled roads leading into and out of the Marine base. They also watched Highway 9.

Their rest was short lived. The battalion separated and companies were ordered back to the mountains. India Co was ambushed en route to the valley near Mutter’s Ridge. Mike Co was hit by enemy mortars and small arms fire.

Lima headed for Fire Support Base Russell, which was raked by enemy mortars and rockets.

But the North Vietnamese soldiers pulled back to snipe and shell, refusing to meet the Marines head on. Contacts were limited. Enemy shelling continued.

Then 3/4 was eased from the mountains and headed toward Cua Viet for five days rest—five days of swimming, showers, stage shows, hot chow and cold beer.

It sounded so promising.

“We got rocketed during our third night there,” Vasquez grinned, “and we returned to the hills the next day.”

As elements of the 3rdMarDiv were relocated, Lima Co, 3/4’s Charlie Squad found themselves manning the northernmost Fire Support Base, providing security for the 105 mm howitzers of Battery H, 3/12.

During the month prior to the redeployment of the 4th Marines, Companies A, B, C and D of 1/4 were located at Quang Tri. Companies K and M were sitting atop Mutter’s Ridge. Co I and the command post were at the Dong Ha Combat Base, and companies E and G were at Elliott Combat Base.

Headquarters Company and Co F were near Landing Zone Mack, north of the Rockpile, and Co H was near Landing Zone Sierra, southwest of the Rockpile.

As the time drew near to board ship, the companies moved south, first to the Dong Ha Combat Base and then to Quang Tri.

The difficult part was waiting. They knew they would be leaving, but so many rumors circulated concerning the actual date that members of Charlie Squad ignored dates and times. But still, they smiled ... .



**PFC James P. Gardner readies the ammunition for an M60 as LCpl Jerry L. Woodruff, the team leader, assumed his post prior to the night watch.**

**Their rest was short lived. The battalion separated and companies were ordered back to the mountains. India Co was ambushed en route to the valley near Mutter’s Ridge. Mike Co was hit by enemy mortars and small arms fire.**

Vasquez assigns his men to security positions, taking his turn along with the others. Patrols are sent out daily and nightly. An observation post on a finger joining the ridge usually held three Marines. A listening post held two.

Marines not on watch would generally “crash,” (sleep) or “sky,” (get out of the bunker to visit “homeys”—meaning Marines from the same hometown).

They play “back alley,” a card game, or write letters or replace soaking wet uniforms with clammy uniforms.

There is no electricity on Dong Ha Mountain, but they strip the wax out of containers which held 81 mm mortar rounds and cut the waxed fiber into two sections, twisting hard. The fiber is made of beeswax and burns like a candle for quite a while.

It also provides a little heat.

Dong Ha Mountain is one of the highest points in a group overlooking an important bridge and Highway 9. Nature doesn’t oblige with a view too often during the monsoon season. It restricts visibility with a curtain of fog and a covering of rain.





**Left: An Army helicopter emerges through the fog atop Dong Ha. Below: It had come to pick up Col Gil Hershey, regimental commander, 4th Marines.**



The Marines lived inside bunkers, and in the torrential rains of the monsoon, many of the bunkers leaked and collected as much as 6 inches of water. Eight Marines slept in the bunker with Vasquez, which had one small puddle, but no pool.

At night, with the transistor radio broadcasting music and news over Armed Forces Radio, Quang Tri, other sounds could be heard.

Marines walking their posts, ponchos rustling as they moved. The rain beating deeper into the mud. Rats scurrying across sandbags and wooden beams, and the guns shooting illumination flares.

In the morning, they shave with cold water. They make coffee out of their C-rations. They talk and laugh.

Vasquez thinks back on the 52 belt buckles that he won competing in rodeos, riding broncs and bulls and roping. LCpl

**Col Gil Hershey, right, CO, 4th Marines, confers with Maj Lee A. Peterson, operations officer for the regiment.**





**“Grunts are the greatest.**

**We eat together and  
we fight together.**

**We sometimes come close  
to dying together. We share  
what little we have, not only  
material things, but even  
private thoughts.”**

**—LCpl Ronald E. Vasquez**

Howard L. Cooper also won a belt buckle for bronc riding, but he boasts that he'll catch up with Vasquez once he's back in the States.

“What the hell you gonna do with 52 belt buckles? You only got one pair of pants,” a voice in the dark asks.

They talk of cars and motorcycles and girls.

“Grunts are the greatest,” Vasquez says.

“We eat together and we fight together. We sometimes come close to dying together. We share what little we have, not only material things, but even private thoughts.

“Sometimes I think that I should have finished college. I had two and a half years studying commercial advertising. But then, if I had received a degree, I might never have been a grunt, and this has been an experience I'll never forget.

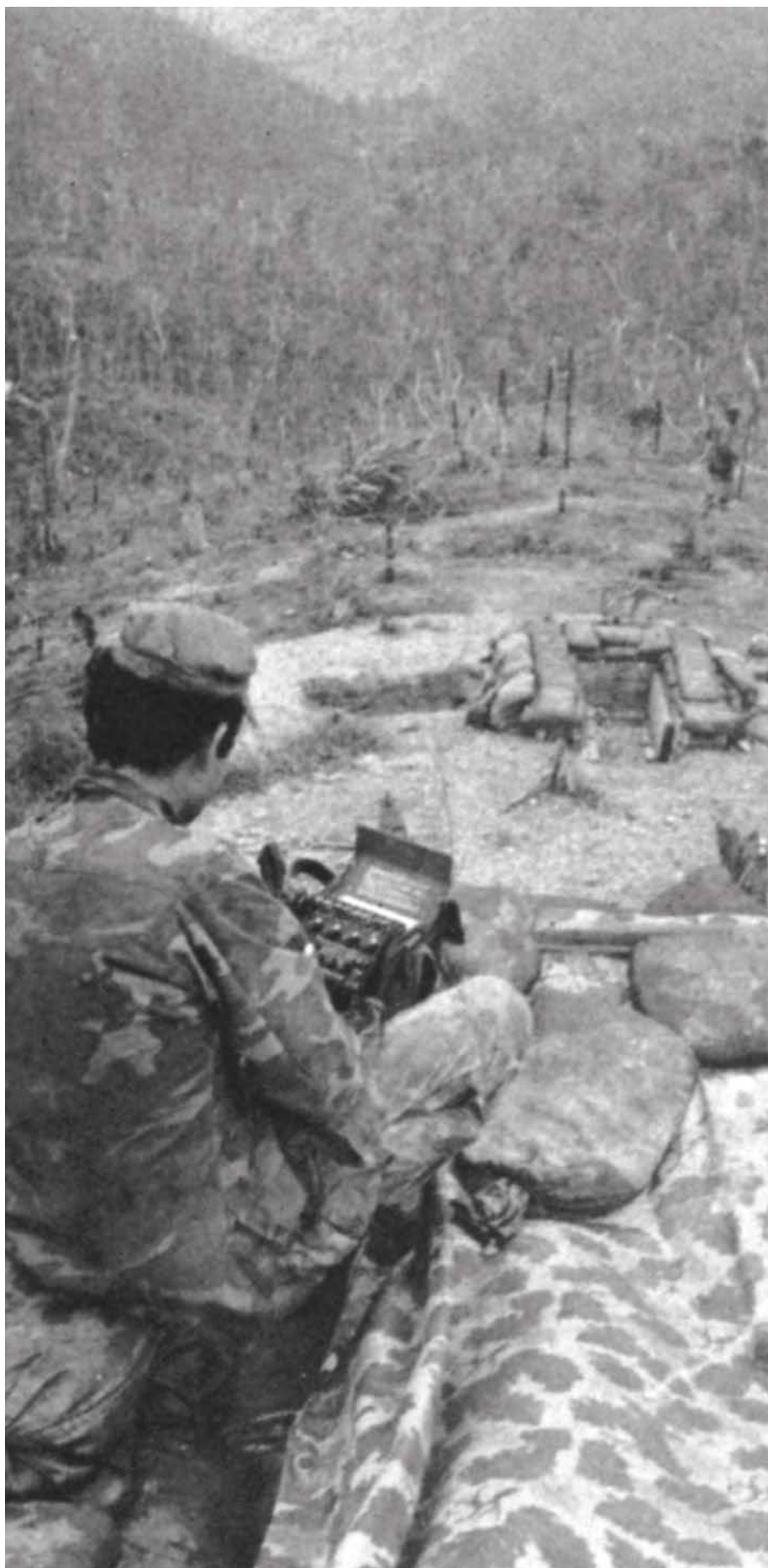
“I'd rather be a grunt than a general. Don't take me wrong, I mean I want to get out of the Corps and finish my education, but if I had a choice about what field to serve in the Marine Corps, I'd choose to be a ground pounder,” Vasquez said.

“Marines here are great,” Second Lieutenant Robert B. Haseman said. He's the weapons platoon commander.

“Their spirit is good. They seem to enjoy themselves in bad circumstances. Guess you could call them ‘motivated’ or ‘proud.’ ”

The squad will move off the mountain, onto ships and off to Okinawa.

But who can forget that a unit of 3/4, first north and last out, once sat on Dong Ha Mountain? And in the mud and the crud of the monsoon rain; in the fog and the mist; in the boredom and the chill lived a group of Marines ... and they laughed!



**Before setting up for the night, LCpl Ronald E. Vasquez checks out a Seismic Intrusion Detector, used to warn of approaching enemy.**

## Baltimore



COURTESY OF JACK COLLERAN

### Fire Station Provides Unique “Home” For Maryland Marine Veterans

Members of the Marine Corps League Baltimore Detachment #565 gathered Oct. 20, 2019, to celebrate the anniversary of 25 years spent in a unique “home”—an 1895 fire station that originally housed a horse-drawn fire company. The detachment, which traces its own history back to 1926, moved its operations into the fire station in 1994 and is the only Marine Corps League detachment in Maryland that has its own building. It’s become a special gathering place that has welcomed Marines, general officers, neighbors, school groups, and curious passers-by. It features a first-floor rental space with a dance floor and stage, and the second floor provides office space for the league and the auxiliary, as well as a museum of approximately 6,500 personal items that tell the story of the Marine Corps.

Submitted by Jack Colleran



COURTESY OF JACK COLLERAN



COURTESY OF USS CONSTITUTION MUSEUM

## Charlestown, Mass.

### WW II Marine Speaks at USS Constitution Museum Event

Marine veteran and author Larry Kirby shared stories of his World War II service with attendees of the Lieutenant William S. Bush Memorial Breakfast, held at the USS Constitution Museum in Charlestown, Mass., Nov. 8, 2019.

The breakfast honored the memory of Bush, who was the first Marine Corps officer to die during the War of 1812. He perished while on board USS Constitution as the ship exchanged cannon fire with HMS Guerriere.

Kirby, pictured on the right, was a scout sniper who enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1942 and took part in amphibious landings at Bougainville, Guam and Iwo Jima while serving with the 3rd Marine Division. He chronicled his personal experiences in his book “Stories from the Pacific: The Island War, 1942-1945.” Following his speech, Kirby accepted a token of appreciation from fellow Marine veteran Jack Abbott, left, who serves on the museum’s board of trustees.

Submitted by Jack Abbott



## San Antonio

### Corps' Top Engineers Recognized During Annual Event

The Marine Corps Engineer Association held its 28th annual reunion and awards banquet in San Antonio, Texas, Sept. 12-14, 2019. Each year, deserving Marine engineers are nominated by their commanders to compete for the title of outstanding engineer in their grade. Headquarters Marine Corps makes the final selections and the association recognizes the individuals and units at its annual awards banquet. The highlight of the evening was recognizing the 20 active-duty Marines, pictured, selected as the Corps' outstanding engineers and EOD technicians. Also recognized as the outstanding engineer units of the year were the 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, 9th Engineer Support Battalion and Engineer Operations Company, Marine Wing Support Squadron 172.

Joe and Chantal Caploe, the parents of the 2019 Combat Engineer Officer of the Year, First Lieutenant Terrence W. Caploe, accepted the



COURTESY OF COL JOEL COOLEY, USMC (RET)

award on his behalf, as he was unable to attend due to a scheduled deployment. Retired Army Brigadier General Joe Schroedel, the executive director of the Society of American Military Engineers, presented plaques to the individuals and unit representatives.

Submitted by Col Joel Cooley, USMC (Ret)

## Houston



COURTESY OF COL JOHN PYLE, USMCR (RET)

### MCL Detachment, Reserve Marines Work Together to Honor Those Who Served

Marines of the McLemore Detachment #324 of the Marine Corps League and Marines with 1st Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment gathered at the Houston National Cemetery in Texas on Dec. 8, 2019, to honor the fallen of the 4th Marine Division.

The two units have held the ceremony annually since 2015. Additionally, the McLemore Detachment conducts an annual

ceremony aboard *USS Texas* (BB-35), which supported the landing on Iwo Jima in 1945, to commemorate the iconic battle. Each year, veterans of the Battle of Iwo Jima have attended and participated in the ceremony. The detachment also participates in more than 40 funerals each year in support of 1/23.

Submitted by Col John Pyle, USMCR (Ret)

**"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: Sara W. Bock, *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to [s.bock@mca-marines.org](mailto:s.bock@mca-marines.org). Submission does not guarantee publication, and we cannot guarantee the return of photos. 🇺🇸**



# Passing the Word

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

## Eagle Eyes Program: If You See Something, Say Something

Across all Marine Corps installations, the Eagle Eyes program acts as the first line of defense, relying on all Marines to help ensure that potential security threats are properly addressed.

Protection programs are critical in the prevention of attacks and defense of the force. Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) assists law enforcement personnel through the reporting of observed behavior that may be indicative of a terrorist or criminal threat.

“With the recent events, it is even more important to be aware and alert,” said Jeff Strohmman, antiterrorism training program manager at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., in reference to heightened

security measures recently implemented on military installations worldwide.

SAR systems enable members of the community to act as the eyes and ears for law enforcement. It is critical for units and commanders to reinforce the requirement



to execute SAR and use programs such as Eagle Eyes, the Marine Corps Suspicious Activity Information Portal (MCSAIP) and eGuardian.

According to MARADMIN 613/18, Eagle Eyes is the official Marine Corps community awareness SAR program.

The program allows anyone to report suspicious activity through the Eagle Eyes website, [www.usmceagleeyes.org](http://www.usmceagleeyes.org), or the designated Eagle Eyes phone number for each base or station. Individuals can provide detailed information and possible imagery from mobile devices, security cameras or other imagery capture devices. All reports submitted through the Eagle Eyes website are automatically uploaded to the MCSAIP and analyzed by specially trained personnel.

There are eight indicators of terrorist detection: surveillance, elicitation, tests of security, acquiring supplies, suspicious people who do not belong, dry runs, deploying assets/getting into position, and financing.

“Everyone is a potential reporter, from



COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**GET OUTDOORS**—Do your 2020 plans involve taking in the natural beauty of Yosemite Falls, pictured here, or visiting any of our nation’s other 400 national parks? Veterans with a 10 percent or higher disability rating may be eligible to obtain a lifetime National Parks and Federal Recreations Lands access pass, granting them free entry not only to the national parks, but also to 2,000 recreation sites across the U.S. You can apply for the pass online or by mail for a \$10 handling fee, or in person for free at a participating federal recreation site. You must provide a VA Summary of Benefits or Award Letter or a Social Security Disability Award Letter that denominates any disability percentage. For active-duty military personnel, a free yearly entrance pass with the same benefits also is available when you present your military ID at a participating location. For more information about the access pass, visit <https://store.usgs.gov/access-pass>.



lieutenants to generals, from privates to sergeants major,” Strohmman said. “That includes contractors, spouses and anyone else who has access to the base.”

LCpl Taylor Smith, USMC

## Responding to 2020 Census Is Critical for U.S. Veterans

Military veterans are a diverse and thriving group of people who contribute in many ways to communities across the U.S. They are teachers, business owners, public servants, volunteers, and civic leaders, all of whom serve in other ways. This spring, veterans can continue to shape the future of their communities by being counted in the 2020 Census.

The U.S. Constitution requires a count of people who live in the nation every decade. The data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau will inform how state, local and federal lawmakers allocate billions of dollars in federal funds every year for the next 10 years for critical public services, including veterans’ hospitals and medical programs, schools, emergency services and critical infrastructure.

The 2020 Census questionnaire only asks a few simple questions about who lives in your household including age, sex, race and ethnicity. Individual responses are confidential and protected by law. For the first time, people will have the option of responding to the census online, by phone or by mail.

While the census only occurs once each decade, the Census Bureau plays an ongoing and vital role in producing statistics to ensure an informed understanding of today’s veterans. With the information collected through Census Bureau surveys, the dramatic changes in the demographic characteristics of the nation’s veterans have changed dramatically since the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Veterans of the Vietnam War are still the largest group of veterans, at 6.7 million. World War II and Korean War veterans are aging, and their numbers are declining. But the post-9/11 group that fought in the Gulf and Iraq Wars is the highest-educated group and has the highest percentage of service-related disabilities, according to 2017 data from the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an ongoing survey that goes to about 3 million homes a year and asks a wide variety of questions. It differs from the once-a-decade census that attempts to count every person once, only once and in the right place.

Post-9/11 veterans are more diverse in gender, race and ethnic origin than earlier generations, according to the Census Bureau. Census Bureau statistics



COURTESY OF CAPT RICHARD HAYEK, USMC

**FOR EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE—**Capt Richard A. Hayek, the adjutant for 12th Marine Corps District, was presented with the USO of Metropolitan New York George Van Cleave Military Leadership Award during the 58th USO Armed Forces Gala and Gold Medal Dinner in New York City, Dec. 4, 2019. Hayek, who has served in the Marine Corps for 23 years, was nominated for the award for various actions that exemplified leadership on and off the battlefield. In 2004, his convoy was attacked by a suicide vehicle-borne IED, and the blast wounded seven Marines. “Amidst the chaos and danger of burning ordnance, Captain Hayek moved to the burning wreckage without regard for his own safety in order to coordinate the air evacuation and secure the site, ultimately saving lives,” read MARADMIN 664/19, which announced his selection as the award recipient. In addition, while a student at Ohio State University, Hayek established an organization called “Vets 4 Vets,” and started an initiative for a veteran student housing program.

show that half of all veterans today are younger than 65. That means there are about 9 million preretirement-age veterans studying, working and helping to shape the future of their communities.

This younger, more diverse population has specialized needs from access to post-military job training and education to more female-centric health care services, as well as parks and schools for their young children. Census Bureau statistics show



that there are a total of 1.6 million female veterans, representing nearly 10 percent of the entire veteran population—and their numbers and impacts are growing.

Responding to surveys and questionnaires from the Census Bureau helps ensure that there is an accurate picture

of communities throughout the nation.

This month, households will receive a mailed invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. Most people will have the option to respond online from any computer device—such as a laptop, smartphone or tablet—as well as by phone or by mail. If veterans are unclear as to how they should count themselves or the people in their home, they should visit “Who to Count” under the “How to Respond” tab at [www.2020census.gov](http://www.2020census.gov).

Veterans need to complete a 2020 Census questionnaire unless they live in group housing, a hospital or another “group quarters” facility. In that instance, a representative of the building will fill out the census questionnaire for everyone who lives in the facility.

To learn more about the 2020 Census and how it will shape the future for veterans, servicemembers and their families, visit [www.2020census.gov](http://www.2020census.gov).

Maggie Van Lieshout



## Jim Lehrer

For more than three decades, James C. “Jim” Lehrer’s nightly news reports reached millions of people. He interviewed countless high-profile newsmakers and moderated presidential debates, but one of the highlights of his life, he said, was the day he served as the keynote speaker at the opening of the National Museum of the Marine Corps in 2006. Lehrer died in January at his home in Washington, D.C., at the age of 85.

Lehrer, whose father was a Marine who served in Haiti in the 1920s, completed Officer Candidates School at Marine Corps Base Quantico during the summer of 1955, while he was a journalism major at the University of Missouri. Lehrer told *Leatherneck* in 2007, that growing up, he and his brother, Fred Jr., learned Marine Corps values from their father. “The biggest thing he gave us was a firm conviction that the Marine Corps was the best service. It never occurred to Fred and me to do anything but join the Marines.”

After he was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1956, Lehrer commanded an antitank assault platoon with the 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment in Okinawa. His next assignment was at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, where he had his first job in journalism, running the weekly newspaper *The Boot*. “I watched every word to make sure no one would get in trouble, particularly me,” he told *Leatherneck*.

In 1959, he left the Marine Corps for a journalism career in the civilian world, working first in print journalism in Dallas, Texas, where he covered the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. Lehrer eventually moved to TV news reporting and documentary production, and he left Dallas for Washington, D.C. In 1975, along with Robert MacNeil, he developed the highly regarded nightly news program “NewsHour” for PBS.

Throughout his career, Lehrer’s Marine Corps roots kept him grounded. “He credited the Corps for all the things he learned about taking responsibility,” said Arthur P. Brill, who interviewed Lehrer for *Leatherneck* in 2007. Brill and Lehrer crossed paths many times over the years at Marine Corps Birthday events that were attended by Marine veterans in the news business in Washington, D.C.

“He was a real patriot, and that’s one of the great blessings of the Marine Corps,” said Brill, explaining that when people spend a few years as a lance corporal or

lieutenant, they never forget what they learned when they return to civilian life. “He had scarlet and gold in his veins,” he added.

Lehrer told Brill he was “stunned and honored” to be invited to give the keynote address at the museum opening. “Why me? I only spent three of my 72 years in the Marines as a piss-ant lieutenant,” he said, adding that he had never worked as hard on anything as he did on that speech, practicing it for his wife no fewer than 34 times.

The speech Lehrer gave at the museum opening was lauded by nearly everyone who heard it, including President George W. Bush and then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Peter Pace. “I gave the speech not only for Dad, Fred and me, but for everyone who wore the uniform. It was an important day and the finest moment of my life,” said Lehrer.

Nancy S. Lichtman

**Charles E. “Charlie” Baker**, 93, of Kettering, Ohio. During WW II he enlisted when he was 18. He served in the Pacific and saw action on Iwo Jima.

**Jeffrey Belonge**, 65, of Shawano, Wis. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after his high school graduation.

**Philip J. Berg**, 92, of Green Bay, Wis. He was a Marine who served during WW II and the Korean War as a heavy equipment mechanic. He was a member of the American Legion.

**Wayne F. Butt**, 65, of Green Bay, Wis. Following his 1972 graduation from high school, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and served a tour in Vietnam.

**Sgt William J. Cleland**, 83, of Albuquerque, N.M. He served with 1stMarDiv from 1954-1958. He later earned a degree in accounting and had a 33-year career with the Department of Energy.

**Bertie W. “Jack” Ditmer**, 92, of Wilmore, Ky. He enlisted during WW II and served in the Pacific. He was assigned to 3rdMarDiv and served in China from 1945-1947. During the Korean War he participated in the Chosin Reservoir Campaign. He was a member of the VFW and DAV. He was the commandant of two MCL detachments.

**Ray Downs**, 99, of Middletown, Ohio. He was a Marine who served during WW II.

**LtCol James J. “Jim” Gende**, 86, of Moline, Ill. He enlisted in 1951 and was selected for OCS. After being com-

missioned, he served in the Korean War. He later completed college and law school and worked as an attorney for 35 years, opening his own law practice.

**Donald Georgia Sr.**, 88, of Green Bay, Wis. He served from 1951-1953. He later had a three-decade long career as a cement finisher.

**Cpl Richard D. Gore Sr.**, 76, of Georgetown, S.C. He enlisted in 1960 and served four years as a wireman. He later had a 20-year career as a Massachusetts State Trooper. He was an active member of the MCL and had previously served as the organization’s 61st national commandant.

**Glen E. Gribble**, 88, of Helena, Mont. He enlisted in 1951 and served in the Korean War. He was assigned to Co D, 1st Eng Bn, 1stMarDiv.

**Hubert J. “Hub” Joski**, 71, of Green Bay, Wis. He was a Marine who served in Vietnam and participated in the Tet offensive. His awards include a Purple Heart.

**Sgt Edward L. King**, 89, of Catonsville, Md. He enlisted in the Marine Corps when he was 18 and was assigned to Co A, 1stEng Bn, 1stMarDiv. He saw action during the Korean War during the Wonsan-Hungnam Chosin Campaign. After the war, he began a 30-year career with the federal government. He was a member of The Chosin Few, serving as a chapter president. He also was a national director of the 50th Reunion of Korean War Veterans.

**Ronald L. “Ron” Larsen**, 77, of Green Bay, Wis. He was a radio technician who served from 1963-1966.

**Cpl John P. Lauriello Jr.**, 96, of Westmont, N.J. During WW II, he saw combat on Iwo Jima as a radio operator with 27th Marines, 5thMarDiv. He was a member of the MCL Det. 1775.

**Ernest Lovato Jr.**, 72, of Albuquerque, N.M. He was a Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War.

**Sgt Andrew J. Lynn**, 40, of Sugarloaf, Pa. He was a combat engineer who served from 1997-2001.

**Sgt Edmond F. Malloy Jr.**, 51, of Smithfield, R.I. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1986 and served for several years before he became a second-generation police officer in Providence, R.I. He organized a yearly Marine Corps Birthday celebration in his community.

**LtCol Darwin D. Minnis**, 90, of St. Joseph, Mo. After his college graduation he was commissioned a second lieutenant. He was a veteran of the Korean War and



served 20 years in the Marine Corps Reserve. He was an educator and a coach in the Waverly, Kan., area.

**MSgt Odell F. Pace**, 76, of Stillwater, Okla. His 25 years in the Marine Corps included a tour in Vietnam. His older brothers were also Marines and all three brothers were stationed on Okinawa at the same time.

**Col Robert E. Parrott**, 93, of Blacksburg, Va. He was a 30-year veteran of the Marine Corps who served during WW II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

**Steve Radika**, 94, of Hibbing, Minn. He was assigned to 1stMarDiv during the Battle of Okinawa in WW II. His awards include a Purple Heart.

**MGySgt Roberto Ramirez**, 55, of Tuttle, Okla. He served for 30 years. He deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, including with "Charlie" Co, 1st Tank Bn in 2003. His awards include the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with combat "V."

**Charles D. Ranney**, 80, of Lake Forest, Calif. He served in the Marine Corps after his graduation from high school and later worked in the aerospace industry for more than three decades.

**SgtMaj Kenneth Rice**, 98, of Bad Axe, Mich. He was a Marine aviator who served

for 21 years. During WW II, he was shot down over the Philippines and captured by the Japanese. He survived the Bataan Death March and was aboard a ship with other POWs bound for Japan when it was torpedoed by an American submarine. He survived and when he arrived in Japan he was sent to work in the coal mines of Nagasaki. He was inside a mine when the atomic bomb was dropped on the city. During the Korean War, he was a forward observer. He later had a 22-year career in the county sheriff's department. His awards include the Army Silver Star for his actions in the Philippine Islands in 1942.

**GySgt Arthur Rivera Jr.**, 83, of Burlington, Iowa. He enlisted when he was 17 and served two tours in Vietnam. He retired in 1975.

**Col J. "Mike" Romero**, 80, of Bosque Farms, N.M. He was commissioned after his 1962 graduation from college and served two tours in Vietnam. After his 1988 retirement from the Marine Corps, he taught JROTC at two Albuquerque high schools for more than a decade. His awards include the Bronze Star with combat "V."

**Sgt William P. "Bill" Sorenson**, 91, of St. Cloud, Minn. He was a veteran of WW II and the Korean War. He was a member

of The Chosin Few. He had a career with the U.S. Postal Service, beginning as a mail carrier and eventually becoming a postmaster. He was a member of the MCA&F.

**Cpl Walter K. Spilleth**, 75, of Mantua, N.J. He served from 1963-1967. He was a member of the MCA&F.

**Capt James W. Spindler**, 80, of Lincoln, Mass. He earned his law degree from Harvard Law School and then served as a legal officer in Vietnam with 3rdMarDiv. He was later assigned to 5thMarDiv in California.

**William J. Ward Jr.**, 86, of Seaville, N.J. He was a Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War. He later had a 50-year career in the insurance industry.

In Memoriam is run on a space-available basis. Those wishing to submit items should include full name, age, location at time of death (city and state), last grade held, dates of service, units served in, and, if possible a published obituary. Allow at least four months for the notice to appear. Submissions may be sent to *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, Va., 22134, or emailed to [leatherneck@mca-marines.org](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org) or [n.lichtman@mca-marines.org](mailto:n.lichtman@mca-marines.org). 🐾



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**SOUND OFF**  
[continued from page 7]

side of the war to its readers as it showed things like the rate of pay for each rank and the listings of promotions all the way down to E-4 at a time in history when the world was in a horrific struggle for freedom itself against an enemy that had committed crimes against humanity that we cannot even imagine today.

Gerald O'Hern  
Murdo, S.D.

**The Untold Story of Iwo Jima**

I've written about some facts many Marines have never heard of and I believe the name of the Marine I've shown as "Marine's Name" below is Rene Gagnon. The story is quite revealing and the facts are true.

The original Iwo Jima monument was sculpted by a famous sculptor named Felix De Weldon in his private studio. A 1-foot thick iron cast was mounted around it so it could be transferred to the place it is now in Arlington, Va.

Years later the officer in charge of a Marine reserve unit in Harlingen, Texas, contacted De Weldon to ask if he would consider doing some kind of sculpture for his reserve unit area. There was a field

next to the post exchange that would be suitable. De Weldon replied in the affirmative and added he could copy the original cast of the Iwo Jima monument in Arlington, have it welded back together, and place it in the spot the officer suggested. That is why the monument in Harlingen is larger. I was personally involved in part of the move.

My step parents lived in Weslaco, Texas, and told me they had a friend who died, but they didn't know when she would be buried. They asked if I'd go to the funeral home and find out the date. While I was there, I found out the director was a Marine as he had a large Marine Corps emblem hanging behind his desk. In addition to asking him about my parent's friend, we talked about the Marine Corps.

He told me about a surviving member of the flag raising Marine detail on Iwo Jima being buried right there in Weslaco. He took me to the gravesite and showed me the headstone engraved with "Marine's Name" but no date of birth or death. I asked him if the Marine's parents were still alive and where they lived. He said they lived a short distance from the cemetery and drove me there to talk to the Marine's parents.

I told them what a great honor it would


be for them if their son was reburied at the foot of the Harlingen Iwo Jima Monument as Iwo Jima was where he lost so many of his Marine buddies. They were reluctant at first because they visited his grave on special occasions in Weslaco but finally agreed since it wasn't that far to Harlingen. I went with them to arrange their son's transfer to the foot of the Harlingen Iwo Jima Monument.

The commanding officer of the reserve unit had a headstone made with "Marine's Name," rank and dates of birth and death. He also added he was one of the surviving Marines of the flag raising on Iwo Jima. His parents were proud of their son and pleased he had been placed there.

MSGT Carl M. "Bud" DeVere Sr.  
USMC (Ret)  
Longmont, Colo.

**Bing West**

I read, "Have Pen, Will Travel: For Bestselling Author Bing West, 30 Trips to Combat Zones Were Worth the Risk," by Sara W. Bock in the November 2019, issue with more than a little interest. In the summer of 1966, I was with 1st Force Reconnaissance Co, operating out of Dong Ha, Vietnam, when Major Dwain A. Colby, then the company commander, green-lighted embedding Marine Corps



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<b>MAY 16-25</b> WWI Doughboys & Devil Dogs French U.S. Battlefields & Paris	<b>AUG 24-SEP 3</b> Vietnam I-Corps "The SgtMaj Returns"
<b>MAY 27-JUN 9</b> 76th Anniversary D-Day & Battle of the Bulge plus Paris	<b>SEP 8-20</b> 50th Anniversary of the VN War-1970 I-Corps
<b>JUN 1-9</b> 76th Anniversary D-Day: Normandy to Paris	<b>SEP 9-14</b> Midway Island Return
<b>JULY 2-12</b> Russia WWII Eastern Front Moscow, Stalingrad & Kursk	<b>SEPT 29-OCT 10</b> Southern Italy & Sicily Taormina, Amalfi & Rome
<b>JULY 18-28</b> Guam Liberation With David Webb, TV/Radio Host	<b>OCT 1-11</b> China "Imperial Jewels" Beijing, Xian & Shanghai
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A background image of several Marines in full combat gear running through a field. The image is slightly faded to allow text to be overlaid.

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## “THE D.I.”

**Louis R. Lazarko**  
USMC 1942-1965 GySGT  
played himself DI SGT 1957

**John R. Brown**  
USMC CPL 1957

**Donald Dubbins**  
USMC 1946-1948

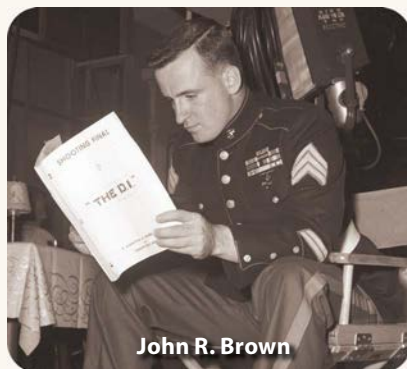
**John T. Ahern**  
USMC PFC 1957

**Charles A. Love**  
USMC TSGT 1957

**Joseph C. Holmes**  
USMC SGT 1957

**Charles M. Golden**  
USMC CPL 1957

**Peter J. O’Neill**  
USMC SGT 1957



John R. Brown

TSGT ROBERT A. SUHOSKY, USMC

**Paul Edward Prutzman**  
USMC SGT 1957

**Gordon Leroy Seiple**  
USMC PFC 1957

**William E. Smith**  
USMC PVT 1957

**Douglas E. Wilson**  
USMC PVT 1957

**Laurence C. Windsor Jr.**  
USMC CPL 1957

COURTESY OF ANNE KOSKINEN

tactical analyst Captain Francis J. West Jr., with Team Primness led by Sergeant Orest B. Bishko.

Sgt Reuben Darby, USMC (Ret)  
Hedgesville, W.Va.

### More Info on the Movie, “The D.I.”

After reading the Sound Off letter titled, “Where Are the Marines from the Movie ‘The D.I.’?” from the December 2019 *Leatherneck*, I was curious too, so I went online to IMDb and pulled up what I could. The information, at left, has the names of each Marine who played a role in the film. If it shows USMC (rank) 1957, that was their rank and they were active at the time. Some have more detail, but almost all of them have no other film credits listed on the IMDb website.

Dubbins was the only one who had been in the Marine Corps previously and was a civilian at the time the movie was made. Some other readers may know more.

I remember this movie from when I was young; it must’ve been played on TV later because my memory has it as us kids watching it with Dad, a World War II, Roi-Namur, Saipan and Tinian and Iwo Jima veteran.

Thank you, Colonel Mary Reinwald, USMC (Ret), for being the editor of our great magazine.

Anne Koskinen  
Ely, Minn.

Here is a listing of Marines who played roles in the movie, “The D.I.”

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In your December 2019 issue, there is a Sound Off letter from Rich Boyd in Lake Elsinore, Calif. His letter requests some information about the Marines from the movie, "The D.I." with Jack Webb. Shortly after I was retired from the Marine Corps I went to work for Northrop Grumman Corporation in Pico Rivera. We Marines love Nov. 10th, and on Nov. 10, 1983, at our birthday party, I met Technical Sergeant "Brad" Bradburn, from the engineering department. He was wearing a really nice Marine Corps watch. I asked him where he got it and he told me it was a gift from Jack Webb for the movie about the drill instructors. TSgt Bradburn stood about 6 feet 3 inches tall and he was not allowed to be in the movie where the star was only about 5 feet 10 inches.

TSgt Bradburn trained Jack Webb to portray a drill instructor and his platoon was used to make the movie. There was a fight scene in the movie by the old wash racks. One of the two Marines fighting was his junior drill instructor, a corporal. Unfortunately, I do not remember the corporal's name.

GySgt Thomas Lakin  
Placentia, Calif.

With reference to Rich Boyd's letter in the Sound Off section of the December 2019 issue of *Leatherneck*, I would like to

inform you that Charley Love, who played Hillbilly in the movie, "The D.I.," was a member of Air Base squadron at Cherry Point, N.C. I was also in that squadron at the same time and was acquainted. I left the Marine Corps in 1950 so I didn't know what happened to him until I saw him later in the movie.

Wallace Pfeifer  
Dwight, Ill.

Joseph Holmes, the recruit rattling off his general orders in the movie, "The D.I.," retired from the Marine Corps in 1983 or 1984 as a master gunnery sergeant. He was the noncommissioned officer in charge of Recruiting Substation Huntsville, Ala., for years.

Maj Earl Wayne Hacker, USMC (Ret)  
Blacksburg, Va.

### Editorial Irish Pennants

In our December 2019 Sea Story, "Once a Marine," Mayor Sly James was listed as being from Kansas City, Kan. He is from Kansas City, Mo.


## WAYS TO SOUND OFF

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 **LETTERS** | Leatherneck, Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134

 **EMAIL** | [leatherneck@mca-marines.org](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org)

Feel like sounding off? Address your letter to: Sound Off, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or send an email to: [leatherneck@mca-marines.org](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 emails must contain complete names and postal mailing addresses. Anonymous letters will not be published.—Editor 

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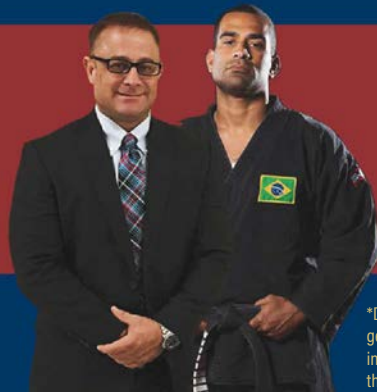
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# Reader Assistance

Edited by Sara W. Bock

## Reunions

• **Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans**, March 28, Punta Gorda, Fla. Contact Al Hemingway, (941) 276-8222, [www.welcomehomevietnamvets2020.org](http://www.welcomehomevietnamvets2020.org).

• **USMC East Coast Drill Instructors Assn.**, April 2-5, Parris Island, S.C. Contact SgtMaj Kenneth D. Miller, USMC (Ret), (828) 757-0968, [usmcpidi@charter.net](mailto:usmcpidi@charter.net), [www.parrislanddi.org](http://www.parrislanddi.org).

• **Marine Corps Engineer Assn.**, Sept. 17-19, Fredericksburg, Va. Contact Maj Charlie Dismore, USMC (Ret), (512) 394-9333, [www.marcorengasn.org](http://www.marcorengasn.org).

• **Marine Corps Cryptologic Assn.**, Sept. 7-10, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Edgar Kitt, 2250 Heavenly View Dr., Henderson, NV 89014, (702) 454-1646, [edgarkitt@earthlink.net](mailto:edgarkitt@earthlink.net).

• **Marine Air Traffic Control Assn.**, Sept. 23-27, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Steve Harris, (509) 499-8137, [sandkh2@gmail.com](mailto:sandkh2@gmail.com).

• **Marine Corps Aviation Assn. Don E. Davis Squadron**, March 19-22, Jacksonville, N.C. Contact Jim Rodgers,

[rodgers77oki@yahoo.com](mailto:rodgers77oki@yahoo.com), [www.avlogmarines.org](http://www.avlogmarines.org).

• **2nd Force Recon Assn.**, May 14-16, Jacksonville, N.C. Contact Carl Schmitt, [carls@2ndforcerecon.org](mailto:carls@2ndforcerecon.org).

• **7th Engineer Bn Vietnam Assn.**, Sept. 10, Arlington, Va. Contact Norbert Johnson, 6100 Cochran Rd., Marlette, MI 48453, (810) 300-0782, [nwgj@outlook.com](mailto:nwgj@outlook.com), [www.usmc.org/7th/](http://www.usmc.org/7th/).

• **11th Engineer Bn, 3rdMarDiv**, Aug. 10-16, Washington, D.C. Contact Gene Spanos, (847) 532-2963, [genethemarine@gmail.com](mailto:genethemarine@gmail.com).

• **1/5 (1986-1992)**, Sept. 10-13, Macomb, Ill. Contact Scott Hainline, (309) 351-2050, [ptimfi@yahoo.com](mailto:ptimfi@yahoo.com).

• **1/27 (1968)**, Sept. 24-26, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Felix Salmeron, (469) 583-0191, [mar463@aol.com](mailto:mar463@aol.com).

• **1/3/7 (all eras)**, April 22-25, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Dennis Deibert, 6007 Catherine St., Harrisburg, PA 17112, (717) 652-1695, [dennisdeibert8901@comcast.net](mailto:dennisdeibert8901@comcast.net).

• **3d 155s, M/4/12, 3rdMarDiv**, Sept.

13-17, Branson, Mo. Contact SgtMaj Gordon Niska, USMC (Ret), (770) 868-8694, [sniska@windstream.net](mailto:sniska@windstream.net).

• **Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan, Task Force Leatherneck (2009-2010)**, May 1-3, Quantico, Va. Contact reunion committee, [taskforceleatherneck@gmail.com](mailto:taskforceleatherneck@gmail.com).

• **Marine Corps Security Forces, Naval Weapons Station Earle**, Sept. 25-27, Colts Neck, N.J. Contact Dusty Wright, (618) 553-2205, [slickstuff@nwcable.net](mailto:slickstuff@nwcable.net).

• **Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (40th anniversary reunion)**, March 2-3, MacDill AFB, Fla. Contact LtCol Cal Lloyd, USMC (Ret), 16115 W. Course Dr., Tampa, FL 33624, (813) 417-4627, [clloyd02@verizon.net](mailto:clloyd02@verizon.net).

• **MCAS "Rose Garden" Nam Phong, Thailand (1972-1973)**, June 12-16, Nashville, Tenn. Contact Harold Delamater, (845) 297-8865, [hgd1025@aol.com](mailto:hgd1025@aol.com).

• **U.S. Naval Disciplinary Command Portsmouth, N.H. (Marine De-**

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tachment), Sept. 14-20, North Conway, N.H. Contact Don Ferry, (972) 334-0609, don.ferry1942@gmail.com.

• **41st OCC/TBS 3-67**, Oct. 22, San Diego, Calif. Contact Paul Disario, (559) 273-9549, pdisario@comcast.net.

• **TBS, Co F, 6-70**, April 30-May 3, Quantico, Va. Contact Tom Kanasky, (202) 366-3156, tkanasky@earthlink.net, or Mitch Youngs, (703) 493-9435, mitchyoungs@verizon.net.

• **TBS, Co I, 9-70**, Aug. 20-22, Quantico, Va. Contact Scott Kafer, 16436 Turnbury Oak Dr., Odessa, FL 33556, (202) 403-7680, scottkaf@mac.com.

• **TBS, Co C, 3-72**, is planning a 50th-anniversary reunion. Contact Col Joe Mueller, USMCR (Ret), (818) 815-8331, jnm21213@yahoo.com.

• **Plt 1187, San Diego, 1969**, is planning a reunion. Contact T.E. Miller, (618) 520-9646, or Mark Elder, (314) 322-8516.

• **Plt 3028, San Diego, 1966**, is planning a reunion. Contact MSgt Bob Rees, USMC (Ret), (619) 940-9218, bobrees86@gmail.com.

• **VFA-125 (1980-1990)**, Sept. 15-17, NAS Lemoore, Calif. Contact MSgt Ben Spotts, (970) 867-8029, benjo1993@msn.com.

### Mail Call

• Alton C. Todd, (651) 283-7185, actodd40@comcast.net, to hear from or about **Jerome M. COFFEY** and **Gerald S. PERRY**, who were stationed at **Camp Del Mar with Co B, 3rd Amtrac Bn, 1stMarDiv, Camp Pendleton, 1959-1961**.

• Gordon Lytle, 1915 Sandy Lake Rd. #253, Carrollton, TX 75006, (214) 679-6949, bassplayer747@gmail.com, to hear from **Marines he served with at Vandenberg AFB, MCLB Barstow Motor-T and DPI 3 Camp Pendleton, 1962**.

• Steven Dean, steven@redskets.com, to hear from members of **Plt 3055, San Diego, 1980**.

### Wanted

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

• Jay L. Campbell, jayl@ntelos.net, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 3030, Parris Island, 1968**.

• Lee Campbell, toddarbes@aol.com, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 354, Parris Island, 1971**.

• Shannon Muzic, (909) 247-4437, smtran2715@gmail.com, wants a **platoon photo and recruit graduation book for**

**Plt 134, San Diego, 1963, and a cruise book for VMFA-513, 1963-1965**.

• T.E. Hetland, (401) 649-2152, cplhet200@gmail.com, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 56, Parris Island, 1957**.

• Robert Brandenburg, rabrand223@yahoo.com, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 3077, San Diego, 1975**.

• Ernest Martin, (678) 454-0764, ernestrm@etcmail.com, wants a **platoon photo and recruit graduation book for Plt 3061, San Diego, 1978**.

### Sales, Trades and Giveaways

• Jacquelyn Rook, (804) 273-9993, roojacquelyn@gmail.com, has a **recruit graduation book for Plt 3100, Plt 3101 and Plt 3102, Parris Island, 2006**, to give away.

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



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Almost two years later, scout snipers from 3/5 observed a pair of insurgents in a parked car near Camp Fallujah, Iraq, videotaping Marine operations in the vicinity. While assessing the possible threat, they noticed the stock of a rifle in the front seat of the vehicle and radioed a warning to the nearby Marines. When the insurgent prepared to fire at the passing Marines, he sealed his fate and that of his companion. Both of the insurgents were killed in the resulting engagement, and upon inspection of the vehicle, this M40A1 rifle was recovered—the same rifle taken in Al Ramadi, although its original Unertl scope had been replaced.

The rifle was given to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in 2007.

*Author's bio: Bruce Allen specializes in arms and armament at the National Museum of the Marine Corps.*



GYSGT MARK OLIVA, USMC

HM2 Andrew J. Campanano, USN, right, and Cpl Angel S. Villalobos, both former "Magnificent Bastards" of 2/4, display the M40A1 sniper rifle that was recovered by 3/5 Marines near Camp Fallujah, Iraq, in June 2006. Campanano and Villalobos were in Ramadi when a four-man sniper team from 2/4 was killed and the rifle was taken by Iraqi insurgents.



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