

AUGUST 2021

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

# Leatherneck

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Marines Return to Basics  
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**24 A Few Days in the Life of a Liaison Officer in Vietnam** *By Capt Raymond Lee Maloy, U SMC (Ret)* In 1966, 2ndLt Maloy served as the Vietnamese liaison officer to the Da Nang/Quang Da Special Sector. His task was to become intimately familiar with the area, its history and the terrain, and identify military, political and civilian organizations and personalities that might affect the mission and performance of the 1stMarDiv.

**32 Major General Smedley Butler: How a Legendary Marine Thwarted a Planned Coup d'État** *By SSgt Joseph Holman, U SMC* This third-place winning article in the 2021 *Leatherneck* Writing Contest tells a lesser-known story of conspirators approaching MajGen Smedley Butler to lead a coup d'état in an attempt to overthrow President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

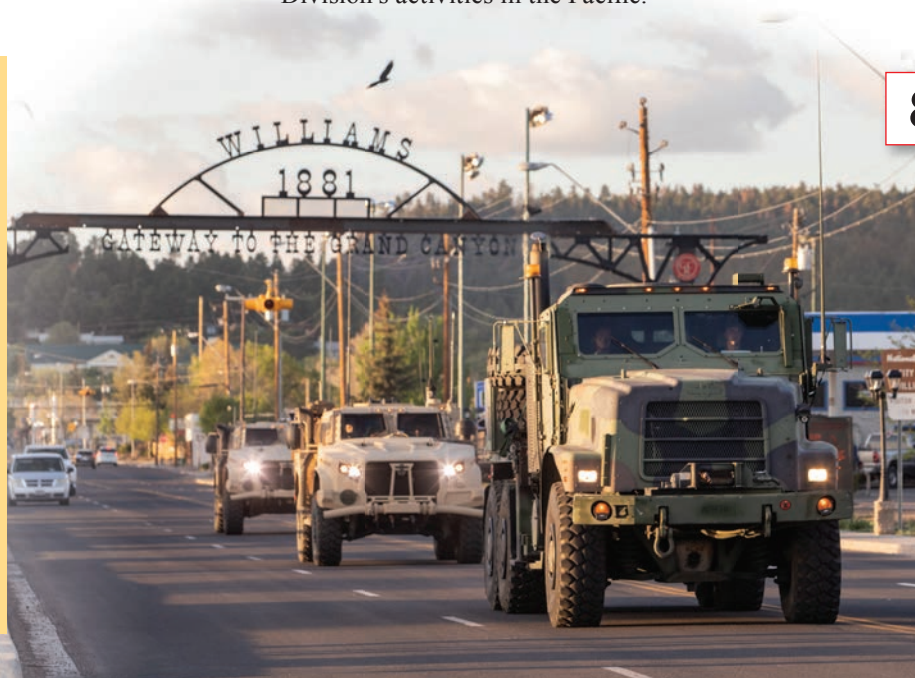
**36 Land of the Free** *By Sara W. Bock* When Marines Ed Roski and Kent Valley met at TBS in 1962, they had no idea that they would become virtually inseparable for the next six decades, nor did they have any idea that their success in commercial real estate would allow them to donate more than \$15 million to military-related charities. Along with Navy veteran John Semcken, they hold a golf classic and dinner that raises around \$1 million annually, helping countless veterans and servicemembers.

**48 Time in the Barrel** *By SSgt Bruce Martin, U SMC* This article from the *Leatherneck* archives describes how Marines holding Con Thien, Vietnam, were pounded by artillery, harassed daily by enemy mortar fire and scourged by the elements. Facing them were 30,000 North Vietnamese soldiers "... eager to kick the staves from the barrel."

**56 History of the 5th Marine Division** *By Joe D. Thacker* This is the fifth in a series of articles from the *Leatherneck* archives about the Corps' Divisions during World War II. Prepared by what was then known as the Historical Division of the Marine Corps, the article traces the 5th Marine Division's activities in the Pacific.

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**COVER:** Marines with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, train in a coxswain course at White Beach Naval Facility, Okinawa, Japan, May 27. Expeditionary Operations Training Group conducted the training and taught Marines maritime navigation, small boat handling, and coxswain techniques. Photo by Cpl Sara Marshall, 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 member or provide a one-year courtesy subscription to a non-member whose letter is selected.)

Thomas J. Burke of Florissant, Mo., wrote a letter published in the June *Leatherneck* [Sound Off] lamenting the absence of Vietnam in Marine Corps history, especially at MCRD. As a high school social studies teacher 30 years ago, I felt the same way about the teaching of history in our public schools and I decided to do something about it. My department chairperson, a U.S. Army combat veteran from the Vietnam War, agreed, and together we developed a curriculum and received approval to teach it as a senior elective. While Vietnam was not a popular topic of discussion at the time, I managed to locate dozens of guest speakers who were willing to share their experiences with my students. It turned out to be one of the most popular electives in my high school. The highlight of my career came when the *New York Times* sent a reporter and a photographer to my classroom to document what I was doing. My story and photograph were published in the *New York Times* on Oct. 21, 1990. At age 80 I still put on my Marine Corps uniform and speak to students at local schools—until COVID closed our public schools last year.

William Ober  
Huntington, N.Y.

## Readers Have High Praise For Corpsmen

I salute all current and past U.S. Navy corpsmen who have served with FMF Marines. The articles written by Sara Bock and Lance Corporal Joseph Barna in the June issue were outstanding. In addition to being educational, the writers brought back memories from my experiences with Docs during my Marine Corps career.

During Operation DeSota in Vietnam in February 1967 while serving as a platoon commander in F/2/7, we came under fire while crossing a rice paddy. Our point Marine was immediately killed in action. One of the three Docs we had with us was called up and was wounded himself.

The next casualty was me. I was hit with a round beneath my flak jacket on my left side. Again, "Corpsman up!" was called, and our second Doc was

wounded attempting to reach me. I went into shock, but I recall being moved to where a medevac would later land to load the wounded and dead, who also included another Doc and platoon sergeant, Staff Sergeant Bishop. Being taken out of action and moved to the rear left me unaware of what occurred during the rest of that eventful day that forever changed my life. It was quite some years later, after making contact with some of my Marines, that I learned my radioman, Lance Corporal Parise, had taken a round in his helmet; the bullet went between the liner and helmet itself and exited out the back with no wounds inflicted.

The platoon guide, Sergeant Small, and Corporal Sireci, a squad leader, earned the Silver Star for taking charge and leading the platoon in further actions. As for myself, I became a paraplegic and was forced to retire from a career which I loved after nearly 14 years of active service. Each day is a holiday and every meal a banquet.

I have often wondered whatever happened to our three Docs. Did they survive the war? Did they return to the company after being patched up? Unfortunately and regrettably, this old geezer has forgotten their names. I can only pray those three Docs are still around and living the good life such as myself. There is no doubt in my military mind that I would not be here today without those dedicated and caring FMF corpsmen. God bless 'em and God bless our U.S. Marine Corps.

2nd Lt John "Jack" Rine, USMC (Ret)  
Ocean View, Del.

• *Our articles on Navy corpsmen brought the largest response from readers that we've seen in long time. Not that we're surprised; Marines will always love their Docs!*—Editor

The June issue of *Leatherneck* featuring corpsmen encouraged this letter. I served from 1957 to 1963 in the 53rd Rifle Co, USMCR, Charleston, S.C. I was, as a colleague who landed at Normandy and received his ticket-home-wound the day after the war ended said, a WWW (Worthless Weekend Warrior). But as Sergeant Breikreutz, USA, admitted, soldiers do not choose their wars, and had he a choice, he would have chosen mine.) The operational brain in the I&I staff of the 53rd was Chief Hospital Corpsman

Roupe. He recruited me and most of the company during his tour, and we all knew that our corpsman was the source of all knowledge (absolutely no sarcasm in that).

In September 2016, I was hospitalized in Auburn, Ala., for three days while doctors determined the dosage for my new heart medicine. I had put off this hospital visit while I nursed my dying spouse who died earlier that year. While sitting on the side of the hospital bed watching the traffic on the highway outside, my cell phone rang. The caller was the dispatcher for the Auburn Police Department. "Where are you?" she demanded. I told her. "Phew! We were worried. The man who delivers your mail called to alert us to your absence. You have not collected your mail in two days, and he knows you have a heart condition, so he thought it necessary to check on you."

Imagine a postman so in tune with the condition of the men and women on his route. Marines reading this will not be surprised to learn that my mailman, John Benefield, during his tour with the U.S. Navy, was a corpsman.

Dr. David O. Whitten  
Sullivan's Island, S.C.

• *Your letter is a lovely testament to how wonderful Docs are—you can take the corpsmen out of the Navy but they'll always love their Marines.*—Editor

I received the June issue of *Leatherneck* and was pleased to see it dedicated to Navy corpsman. I quickly found the articles to see if my uncle was mentioned, and there he was on page 42, PhM1c Francis J. Pierce, being awarded the Medal of Honor by President Harry S. Truman. My uncle received the Medal of Honor for treating Marines on Iwo Jima while assigned to 2nd Bn, 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division. It was my uncle who was instrumental in my decision to join the Marine Corps during the Vietnam war in 1967, and I served a tour there during 1967 and 1968. My entire family was Navy, Army and Air Force. I'm the only jarhead in the bunch, but I know my uncle, who has passed on, would approve.

My grandparents had only two pictures hanging in their entire home. One was my grandfather receiving his American citizenship, and the other was the same picture of my uncle receiving his Medal of Honor by President Truman that you reprinted. His hometown of Earlville,



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Iowa, has a park dedicated to him that has a black marble bench with his image on it and these words: Medal of Honor, WW II Iwo Jima Campaign, 15-16 March 1945, Pharmacist's Mate 1st Class, 2nd Battalion/24th Marines, 4th Marine Division, U.S. Navy, Francis J. Pierce, Earlville, Iowa. I have a picture of that bench taped to a shelf above my desk just below the Francis J. Pierce Medal of Honor G.I. Joe doll.

After leaving the Navy at the end of World War II, my uncle joined the Grand Rapids, Michigan police department and retired as assistant chief. It gave me great pride to see my uncle's picture in *Leatherneck*.

SSgt Michael Pierce, USMC  
Prescott Valley, Ariz.

• *Thank you for your family's impressive record of service and for also telling us the rest of the story about your uncle. It seems fitting that your uncle continued to serve his community when he went home.—Editor*

The write up and stories on the Hospital Corps were excellent. It brought back many memories from my service days. Your up-to-date training and current upgrades on patient care were clear and concise. To read about the genesis of medical care at the start and survival rates is great.

To see the Basilone Rd. and San Onofre road sign ["Hey, Dude, Semper Fi! Camp Pendleton's Surfing History Told in Newly Released Book,"] was a trip. I traveled it many a time back to U.S. Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton, the old naval hospital.

A story on the dental branch would be nice. I remember the dental department had Navy corpsmen back in 1961 to 1966. The best thing about our service branches is we all work together to protect our great nation and each other. I read *Leatherneck* front to back every month.

John Sanchez  
USN, 1961-1966  
Hanford, Calif.

• *We'll see what we can do about a story on the Dental Corps. My first assignment as a second lieutenant was to 2nd Dental Battalion as the S-4 and my tour there gave a deep appreciation for what Navy dentists and dental techs do for our Marines.—Editor*

The two articles in the June *Leatherneck* on Navy corpsmen were simply outstanding. However, if the Navy Hospital Corps was founded in 1898, and this

being 2021, I think the Hospital Corps is 123 years old, not 122.

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

• *You're right and we apologize for the mistake.—Editor*

## San Onofre Beach Article Intriguing

I was intrigued by the article in the June issue of our magazine. "Hey, Dude, Semper Fi! Camp Pendleton's Surfing History Told in Newly Released Book," concerning San Onofre Beach and the surfing activities there.

I was the base facilities operations officer from 1968 until I retired in early 1971. President Nixon liked to spend time at his "Western White House," situated on what had been a LORAN (Long Range Aids to Navigation) station, at the extreme northwest tip of the base. The President had a home just over the Orange County line and a portion of the concrete block wall was cut open so he could drive his golf cart to his office. I was tasked with ensuring the surfers did not come near the trestles—the favorite surfing spot.

I designed a cubic yard of concrete with a sloping front. I had a sign painted on the slope "Government property. No trespassing." I figured if the surfers would deface the sign, we'd just paint over it and replace the warning. I never figured how creative the surfers were. They gathered beach rock and began beating on the concrete until it was reduced to powder.

The Secret Service would also stand guard on the beach. They were ill-equipped and dressed in slacks, white shirts and wingtips, with a big lump in their back pocket and stood there with an unbaited fishing pole looking silly.

One day I received a call that there was a strange vehicle in the San Mateo riverbed. I soon found out it was an Amphibious Track Vehicle belonging the Orange County Mosquito Abatement District. I called the district and was told that they had received a report of mosquitoes and were treating the area. I asked if they had received a specific complaint (considering the President was in residence) and was assured that they were only taking precautionary measures. I asked if they had identified any mosquitoes as being Marine mosquitoes. They couldn't so I told the office that I was directing our military police to confiscate the vehicle if it remained on federal property another 15 minutes as it had trespassed into San Diego County and was on the Marine base.

Maj James Murphy, USMC (Ret)  
Los Osos, Calif.

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## Recollections of a Korean War Cannoncocker

Sergeant Jerry Keenan's excellent article, "Recollections of a Korean War Cannoncocker" [April issue] resonated with me in two important ways. First, Sgt Keenan's service in Korea during the Outpost War roughly coincided with that of my late father, Sgt Robert Barber. Dad served as an 0844 (field artillery fire controlman) with Fox 2/11 from September 1951 until September 1952. He arrived in Korea shortly after the fighting at the Punchbowl ended and had vivid memories of the events of his year in combat including the move the 1stMarDiv made from the east end of the line all the way to the west, which Sgt Keenan described so well, and fighting against no less than three Chinese divisions in bitter small unit actions. After his time in Korea my father served with the 11th Marines at Camp Pendleton. During that tour, he was detailed to spend more than a month in the Mojave Desert surveying what was then a new training site, Twentynine Palms. He also served at the Marine Barracks in Key West, Fla. I know Dad would have thoroughly enjoyed Sgt Keenan's "Recollections"—wish he were still around to have read it.

The second point of interest for me in Sgt

Keenan's piece was his pre-Korea service with Battery C, 1st Bn, 10th Marines at Camp Lejeune, N.C. From 1980 until 1982 I had the privilege of serving as an 0802 with Charlie Battery, filling every billet from Forward Observer to Fire Direction Officer to Infantry Battalion Liaison Officer (with 3/2), to, finally, executive officer. In that last position I had the honor to lead 0811s like Sgt Keenan—truly a humbling and rewarding experience.

I have no doubt that Sgt Keenan would have been right at home on Charlie's gun line. Even as late as 1982 we were still shooting the 105 mm howitzer, the 101A1. I can't shake the feeling that Sgt Keenan might have touched the same howitzers. The breach blocks on at least two of our pieces bore date stamps from the 1940s.

Maj Robert C. Barber  
USMC, 1979-1991  
Springfield, Va.

## Surprise Finding

This writer being a veteran Marine of the Korean conflict period would like to relate my surprise at having found two Marine dress blue uniforms, with corporal chevrons awarded some time ago, in a black travel bag hanging in my spare unused closet. One set belonged to me, now 86 years old, and the second uniform

belonged to my young son at the time of his enlistment from 1982 to 1985. He is now 54 years old. Both my son and I have fond memories of our time in the Marine Corps reminiscing about those long-ago years serving that we both will always cherish.

We both have agreed to keep and secure the uniforms in our family history for all our grandchildren to see and to be proud of our services to our country and the great admiration we have for our Marine Corps, the tradition and heritage established, both members of the Marine brotherhood and sisterhood for eternity.

Cpl John Messia Jr., USMC (Ret)  
Brockton, Mass.

## Reader Would Have Preferred a Map

In the May issue of *Leatherneck*, the use of illustrations to accompany the excellent article, "Hell's Half Acre" was ill-advised. I regret saying that because early in my career I was an illustrator. Coming by assignments was not easy. The excellent illustration of the freezing militiaman lent character to the narrative. However, the use of illustrations herein did nothing to illuminate the narrative. For instance, there is considerable reference to places in and along the Delaware

[continued on page 68]

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# In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock



LCPL SCOTT JENKINS, USMC

**Marines with 2nd Transportation Bn, CLR-2, 2nd MLG drive through Williams, Ariz., May 15, during one of the longest convoys in recent Marine Corps history. The convoy departed Camp Lejeune, N.C., traveled to MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, Calif., and then returned to Camp Lejeune.**

## **UNITED STATES OF AMERICA Across America and Back: Marines Complete Historic Convoy**

In one of the longest military convoys in history, Marines drove 18 vehicles approximately 5,500 miles roundtrip in a continuous 34-day mission returning to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 3.

The convoy, made up of Marines from 2nd Transportation Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, drove from Camp Lejeune to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., and back. In a mission which sought to test the limits of Marine Corps capabilities, the Marines not only pushed their vehicles farther than ever before, but also tested their limits and the strength of their command and control abilities.

“This sets the bar—this is the new standard,” said Brigadier General Forrest Poole, the commanding general of 2nd MLG. “We’re looking to replicate this in

a different environment, maybe outside of the United States. It highlights the importance of Marines and Sailors trusting their equipment and ... [those] on their left and right.”

The convoy broke new ground not just for its record-setting length, but also for the communications experiments that were conducted during the journey. Marines tested tactics and procedures for employing distributed command and control over long distances. At each stop along the convoy, they used High Frequency (HF) beyond line-of-sight, highly secure radio communications to regularly speak with an operations center all the way back in Camp Lejeune.

The HF radio calls to the combat operations center in Camp Lejeune took place across the southern United States, from stops in Albuquerque, N.M., Texarkana, Texas, and the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

HF radios are an older technology with military uses dating back to the 1930s.

Once a go-to choice for communications, they fell out of favor with the advent of satellite communications and other radio technologies.

“Using HF radios allows us to communicate over great distances without having to rely on other methods that the enemy can detect,” said Staff Sergeant Coltin Davenport, regimental communications chief for Combat Logistics Regiment 2. “They have a long history in the Marine Corps, going all the way back to the Navajo Code Talkers on Iwo Jima.”

HF radio communications benefit from increased data throughput and resiliency, which are critical factors in the fight against near-peer adversaries. Conducting such an exercise across the U.S. increases the Marine Corps’ ability to fight and win by executing effective command and control in a challenging environment.

“This mission has run smoothly due to the detailed preparation effort and competency of the team on the road. All

**SSgt Coltin Davenport, regimental communications chief, right, and Cpl Owen Trinidad, a field radio operator, left, set up a radio antenna in the Grand Canyon near Grand Canyon Village, Ariz., May 14, during 2nd Transportation Bn's convoy across the U.S.**



LCPL SCOTT JENKINS, USMC

issues encountered have been solvable and attacked at full force by the whole team both on the road and in support through the COC,” said Captain Adam Devine, who commanded the convoy. “The Marines and Sailors ... continued to look forward to the next day’s challenge.”

When the convoy returned to Camp Lejeune on June 3, a homecoming ceremony was held. The Marines and Sailors who participated in the convoy were lauded for their achievement and reminded of the importance of such exercises in maintaining Marine Corps readiness in the future fight.

By participating in this type of training, 2nd MLG helps ensure that the logistics combat element of the Fleet Marine Force is ready and able to provide the transportation support critical to accomplishing a wide range of military operations.

Capt Robert Vachon, USMC



LCPL SCOTT JENKINS, USMC

**Cpl Owen Trinidad gets a radio check at Kirtland Air Force Base, N.M., May 11, during a stop on the 5,500-mile convoy conducted by 2nd Transportation Bn.**

## UNDISCLOSED LOCATION

### Eyes to the Sky: Infantry Marines Employ Counter-UAS

Throughout the training pipeline, Marine Corps infantrymen can expect to shoot countless rounds, hike endless miles and navigate acres of land. They show up to the School of Infantry where combat instructors are charged with ensuring the new Marines understand the concepts of shooting, moving and communicating. They become extremely proficient at

locating, closing with and destroying the enemy by fire and maneuver. The Marines use the experience that their instructors gained in Iraq and Afghanistan and apply those lessons to their own “internal toolbox” that they will use as infantrymen.

In recent times, these young, forward-deployed “03XX”s have been handed a new type of weapon designed to deter Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). As the enemy has evolved to modernize their capabilities through the use of drones

and other variants of UAS, new systems have evolved to counter these threats. Drones have not only been utilized by enemy forces to gain intelligence on U.S. and allied bases, but they have also been weaponized. The Marine Corps is not taking this threat lightly.

Marines have been supplied with various handheld devices which are effective at jamming or taking control of enemy drones throughout the U.S. Central Command area of operations and Marines assigned to Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force—Crisis Response-Central Command have been receiving training on the new assets.

The Drone Buster is one of the Marine Corps’ newest counter-UAS assets. It is a handheld jammer which has the ability to force a UAS to descend or to return to its operator. If a drone is positively identified, a Marine standing on post can easily point the device at the drone and eliminate it as a threat.

“As we face an ever-evolving enemy, it is important to be able to mitigate the threat at the lowest possible level,” said Captain Christopher Syrowik, a forward air controller assigned to 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. “Putting the Drone Buster in the hands of a lance corporal allows him to have a large impact while remaining mobile and lethal.”

The handheld systems allow the Marines to remain expeditionary and ready to move at a moment’s notice. Regular training with the devices also reinforces the confidence that the Marines have in their ability to effectively engage their intended target. This added capability enables the rifleman to protect personnel and assets from a modernized enemy.

GySgt Melissa Marnell, USMC



GYSGT MELISSA MARNELL, USMC

**Above: A Marine with 2/1, assigned to SPMAGTF—CR—CC, participates in counter-UAS training in the U.S. Central Command area of operations, May 21. The training involved familiarization with the handheld devices that are designed to detect and deter enemy drones.**



GYSGT MELISSA MARNELL, USMC

**Sgt Gerri Mesker, an infantry assault Marine with 2/1 assigned to SPMAGTF—CR—CC, delivers a period of instruction on the use of handheld counter-UAS devices in an undisclosed location, May 21.**

## OKINAWA, JAPAN

### Jungle Warfare: Marines Test Littoral Combat Skills

The heavy blades of helicopters can be heard above the thick jungle canopy where hundreds of U.S. Marines silently maneuver through the stifling terrain to gain a positional advantage against a peer-level adversary. Meanwhile, a platoon of Marines executes an amphibious assault into another remote part of the jungle—swiftly navigating through nearly 20 nautical miles of turbulent coastal waters, flanking the enemy and immediately entering the fight to control the key maritime terrain. With sweat pouring silently down every green and brown-striped face, the Marines relentlessly battle against their “foe” across an island filled with mountains, mud and dense vegetation where heat and humidity radiate endlessly.

These were but a taste of the scenes



LCPL SCOTT AUBUCHON, USMC

**Above: Marines with 2/2 conduct a patrol during JWX in the Northern Training Area, Okinawa, Japan, May 24. The unscripted force-on-force exercise tested and strengthened the Marines' ability to operate within distributed jungle and littoral environments.**



LCPL UJIAN GOSUN, USMC

**During JWX, 1stLt Eunwon Lee, the fire support team leader with 3/3, calls for fire support in the Northern Training Area, Okinawa, Japan, May 26. As part of the Unit Deployment Program, 3/3 is forward deployed in the Indo-Pacific under 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division.**

during the Jungle Warfare Exercise (JWX) spearheaded by 4th Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, and supported by elements from across III Marine Expeditionary Force and the Joint Force on Okinawa, Japan, May 24-28. This unscripted force-on-force exercise featuring more than 800 Marines operating in the field centered on the Northern Training Area (NTA) as its natural characteristics reflect much of the terrain within the islands of the Indo-Pacific region.

The exercise pitted two reinforced infantry companies against each other—one from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, and the other from 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment—and simulated a realistic fight across multiple domains against a thinking, adapting, peer-level adversary in distributed jungle and littoral environments. Marines from both units spent numerous hours sharpening their skills in the harsh mountains of Okinawa's NTA, moving themselves and their equipment for miles over the jagged and thickly forested peaks and through steep and viscously muddy draws in the landscape.

The unique skills to be successful in this environment did not come to the Marines of 2/2 and 3/3 by chance; rather,



LCPL SCOTT AUBUCHON, USMC

**Marines with 2/2 engage the enemy during JWX in Okinawa, Japan, May 26. The exercise simulated a realistic fight across various types of terrain.**

JWX was the culmination of nearly a year of training that took place during and prior to their deployments, which enabled their forces to successfully execute what amounted to a complex large-scale combat rehearsal for littoral warfare.

“All members of our team repeatedly practiced and became proficient operating in this type of terrain prior to JWX, which was a significant advantage in this combat rehearsal,” said Corporal Justin Rohn, a squad leader with 3/3, who emphasized the value of training at the Jungle Warfare Training Center earlier in his deployment.

The exercise allowed both infantry battalions to showcase their aptitude to not only survive, but to effectively employ the

skills and tactics required to gain and maintain control of contested terrain in an incredibly unforgiving littoral environment.

“We train in austere environments, we survive, we sustain, and we do whatever is needed to win,” said Staff Sergeant Joshua Long, current operations chief with 4th Marines.

“This type of training reinforces our ability to capture small islands,” said First Lieutenant Matthew Cole, a platoon commander with 3/3 who led the formation of combat rubber raiding craft in the amphibious assault.

Integration with joint partners provided opportunities to incorporate specialized capabilities from the U.S. Army 1st Spe-

cial Forces Group, U.S. Air Force 33rd Rescue Squadron, U.S. Navy Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 85 and the U.S. Space Force monitoring operations and providing feedback in support of signature management assessment. Support from elements of III MEF included amphibious reconnaissance from 3rd Recon Bn, logistics support from Combat Logistics Battalion 4, long-range precision fires capabilities from 3rd Battalion, 12th Marines, and assault support and casualty evacuation capabilities from 1st Marine Aircraft Wing.

“This exercise demonstrates that III MEF is ready right now to fight against a thinking enemy in defense of an island, incorporating littoral maneuver across domains,” said Colonel Matthew Tracy, the commanding officer of 4th Marines and a seasoned combat veteran with experience in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo and the Western Pacific. “We are creating the most strenuous, difficult and demanding training environments to grow our warfighting prowess.”

1stLt Benjamin Yoder, USMC

## **NORTHERN TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA**

### **Marines, Allies Train for Rapid Crisis Response**

Marine Rotational Force–Darwin and the Australian Defence Force successfully completed Crocodile Response, a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercise in Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, May 28.

The focus of Crocodile Response was to increase the readiness of the U.S. Marines and Sailors in Darwin and their ability to conduct foreign humanitarian assistance operations in the event of a natural disaster in the Indo-Pacific region.

“Marine Rotational Force–Darwin needs to be ready to support our allies in the region by rapidly responding to a crisis such as a natural disaster, should the need arise,” said MRF–D Commanding Officer Colonel David M. Banning.

During the field training phase of the exercise, U.S. Marines and members of the Australian Defence Force honed their ability to conduct support activities such as purifying water, clearing trees and brush from roadways, coordinating the transportation and delivery of troops and large equipment, establishing landing zones and providing basic medical care.

“One of the most important things we can do after a country is hit by a natural disaster is provide medical support to the affected community. Our medical capabilities allow us to provide first aid, immediate lifesaving measures, and triage, as well as prevent disease,” said U.S. Navy

**From the left, Australian Army Craftsman Benjamin Flavell and U.S. Marines LCpl Jerry GarciaVillegas and LCpl Jose MartinezLopez, both water support technicians with CLB-7, MRF-D, set up a water purification point during Exercise Crocodile Response at Point Fawcett, Northern Territory, Australia, May 25.**



SGT MICHA PIERCE, USMC

Hospital Corpsman Second Class Julian Gordon.

Crocodile Response was conducted in three phases: the joint humanitarian operations training phase, the tabletop exercise phase, and the field exercise phase. The three phases ensured that the U.S. Marines, the Australian Defence Force, the U.S. Bureau for Humanitarian

Assistance and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade built upon learned skills to enhance everyone’s understanding of policies that allow the military to provide humanitarian support in an affected country, as well as to raise awareness of each other’s capabilities and planning processes.

“The Joint Humanitarian Operations

Course was great because it outlined all the requirements and steps our governments need to take for us to provide assistance with the Australian Defence Force and other government agencies like the U.S. Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade,” said First Lieutenant Marcus Jones.

The tabletop exercise phase helped develop proficiency with the Marine Corps’ rapid response planning process. This process ensures that when Marines receive a mission, they are able to plan and begin execution of the mission quickly. Planning was done in coordination with all exercise participants to synchronize humanitarian assistance efforts.

The exercise concluded with the final phase, a five-day field training exercise at Point Fawcett on the Tiwi Islands. During this phase, U.S. Marines and the Australian Defence Force used the Marine Corps’ ability to transport troops and equipment with the MV-22B Osprey, used the Australian Army’s ability to transport equipment with their Landing Craft Mechanized, Mark 8 and conducted many of the foreign humanitarian assistance activities MRF-D was tasked with accomplishing.

“Deploying side by side, using both Australian Defence Force watercraft and U.S. Marine Corps aircraft allows us to get to know each other’s processes, policies and procedures at the personal level and organizationally, proving the



SGT MICHA PIERCE, USMC

**Australian Army Engineer Tyson Buckley, left, and leatherneck LCpl Deitrick McMahan, a combat engineer with CLB-7, MRF-D, build a barbed-wire fence during Exercise Crocodile Response in Northern Territory, Australia, May 25. The exercise tested the ability of MRF-D and the Australian Defence Force to provide disaster relief in the Indo-Pacific region.**



SGT MICHA PIERCE, USMC

**SSgt Benjamin Dampier, left, an air traffic controller, and Cpl Ty Cochrane, right, an air support operations operator, both with VMM-363 (Reinforced), MRF-D, watch an MV-22B Osprey land at Point Fawcett, Northern Territory, Australia, May 27. The rotational deployment of U.S. Marines affords a combined training opportunity with Australia and improves cooperation and integration between the two countries' forces.**

plans and capabilities we have in place to respond to a humanitarian crisis together,” said Australian Defence Force exercise controller, First Lieutenant Bryce Williams.

Other participants included service-members from the Philippines and Malaysia who took part in the joint humanitarian operations training phase. Additionally, officials from the Indonesian National Armed Forces and representatives from Indonesia’s National Disaster Management Agency and Indonesia’s National Search and Rescue Agency observed throughout the exercise and shared their significant operational experiences.

All participants quarantined for two weeks prior to the exercise and strictly adhered to all COVID-19 mitigation measures in accordance with Australian health protocols.

The year 2021 marks the 10th anniversary of MRF-D, which has proven to be a significant force for stability and security in the region. It has created new opportunities for regional engagement and has better postured the U.S. and Australia to respond to crises in the Indo-Pacific.

1stLt Gabriel Lechuga, USMC

### **CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. Range G-36 Goes Dark in First-Ever Night Live-Fire Training Event**

After months of preparation and planning, 2nd Marine Division conducted the first night live-fire training on Range G-36 at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., May 23.

The range, which is Camp Lejeune’s first company-level battle course, opened in December 2020. Since its debut, units have run the course only in the daytime due to the challenging and unfamiliar layout, including dense tree lines and uneven terrain making up the majority of the training area.

“The range has about a 10 square-kilometer footprint and is the largest, and arguably most challenging, range for an infantry unit to maneuver and conduct live-fire training on Camp Lejeune,” said Major Patrick Hassett, operations officer with 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division. “There are significant complex live-fire problem sets within the battle course.”

Maneuvering company assets—which include combat engineers, heavy weaponry, mortars and vehicles with Combined

Anti-Armor Team—requires months of training in order to successfully seize and hold objectives swiftly and safely in the dark.

The first battalion within 2ndMarDiv slated for the challenge was 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment. The battalion conducted reinforced attacks with its three companies as the “finale” of its Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation (MCCRE), which is used to test battalions on deployment readiness.

On May 22, “Echo” Company, 2/8 took to the battle course, making history as the first company to demonstrate a successful level of proficiency on G-36. In order to excel in the difficult environment, Echo Co first rehearsed with no ammunition during the day and also at night, when Marines and Sailors were equipped with night vision optics to navigate the terrain.

“Keeping accountability while trying to maintain fire team integrity and understanding where the supporting and adjacent units are [located] is extremely challenging at night,” said Sergeant Sam Griffith, a squad leader with Echo Co. “As a small unit leader, you have to identify these things on the deck, fix it on the



**Below: Marines with Golf Co, 2/8, 2ndMarDiv, assault an objective on a company battle course on Range G-36, MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., May 27. The battalion was the first to complete the company-reinforced live-fire attack at night on the range, which opened in December 2020.**



LCPL JACQUELINE PARSONS, USMC



LCPL JACQUELINE PARSONS, USMC

**Left: Marines with Echo Co, 2/8, 2ndMarDiv, suppress targets on a company battle course on Range G-36 at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., May 23. The event was the culmination of their Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation, certifying the unit as an apex battalion.**

“Being an apex battalion means that we are the most lethal and ready a battalion can be,” said Second Lieutenant Senen Ubina, a platoon commander with Echo Co. “We are the most combat ready unit, and if we’re called to go somewhere and execute missions, then we’re prepared to our utmost ability.”

While this is a significant milestone for 2/8 and 2ndMarDiv, the end goal for the Division is to have all its battalions reach apex status. With G-36 fully functioning and ready for other units to make their mark on its vast training area, it is only a matter of time before 2ndMarDiv is fully equipped with battalions that are more trained, lethal and combat ready than ever before.

LCpl Jacqueline Parsons, USMC



fly, debrief after, and correct the mistakes that you’ve made; that’s how you get better every time.”

When ammunition was introduced the following day, Staff Sergeant Andrew Tarleton, a platoon sergeant with Echo Co, said his platoon did very well in the day attacks, but he said the night attacks brought a different emotion.

“Going into the night live-fire attacks, my platoon was excited,” said Tarleton. “To be the first battalion to conduct the range at night is something we take a lot of pride in.”

At the end of the evaluation, all three companies in 2/8 completed the live-fire battle course in the day and night, earning the distinction of an “apex battalion.”

## SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

### Happy Halloween, Honey

I was with 3rd Recruit Training Battalion at Parris Island in October 1961. I had great drill instructors (DIs): Staff Sergeant Taylor, Sergeants McKenna and Shagnon.

It was a good day until mail call. My girlfriend at the time thought it would be funny to send me a Halloween card with a lollipop and a monkey mask inside. As a result, my DIs thought it would be nice if I trick-or-treated around the battalion. They tied the monkey mask on my face with my boot lace, cut a hole for the lollipop, and with a smokey bear hat and a poncho, off I went.

I asked permission to speak to each DI and after being told, "Speak, maggot!" I reluctantly said, "Trick-or-treat, Sir." After that was over, I thought that was it. Not so. After wearing it to morning, lunch and evening chow, I was finally able to get rid of the costume.

Incidentally, my girlfriend sent me a "Dear John" letter the following October while I was with Co H, 2/2 in Gitmo.

SSgt Lawrence  
"Hank" Henrickson  
USMC, 1961-1968  
Berwick, Pa.

### It Wasn't the Good Ship Lollipop

I don't like to swim in the ocean. Sand gets in places it was never meant to be. That may be ironic since I wound up in the Marines. I had never been on any watercraft bigger than a 15-foot fishing boat when I joined the Corps in 1958, so I had never experienced sailing in the deep blue. By the time I shipped over to Okinawa, I

had only flown commercial a couple times between San Diego and Phoenix—the first time on a DC-3, the second on a small turboprop. I hadn't experienced air sickness either time, so I was unprepared for what was ahead.

In late 1959, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines, under the command of then-Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth

**One particular sergeant was obnoxious to all us greenies. He was on his second tour and bragged about being a seagoing Marine with a Med cruise under his belt. He wouldn't admit that he was affected by the rough voyage, but one evening he got his comeuppance.**

J. Houghton, departed California on USS *General J.C. Breckinridge* (AP-176), a World War II single crew troop ship. We even took our brig-rats. They were simply transferred from the Camp Pendleton brig to the *Breckenridge* brig to the Okinawa brig to finish their sentences before returning to the battalion.

We immediately hit heavy seas which lasted the entire journey to Japan. By the second day out, we were told that the brig was in ankle deep water; something about a split seam due to heavy weather was how the swabbies explained it. As miserable as I was, I

couldn't help feeling a little pity for those guys.

It wasn't just the disconcerting feeling of having to look up to see the tops of the 40-foot swells we wallowed through for the entire journey that was bothersome. As the old tub would crest a swell and dive into the next trough, the single prop would come partway out of the water, slapping at it and sending a shudder through the ship. Very few of us weren't seasick from the start. Even old salt Sailors were getting sick. I lived on food from the geedunk for most of the first week because I couldn't stand in a chow line below deck without throwing up. The routine in the chow line, as it stretched out of the mess hall, was to stay alert for anyone making a mad dash from their table in an ill-fated attempt to make it topside before giving up whatever food they had managed to swallow. At the cry of, "Sick man coming through," everyone would flatten themselves against the bulkhead and hope the unfortunate soul made it past them before vomiting. I was seasick to some degree the entire trip.

One particular sergeant was obnoxious to all us greenies. He was on his second tour and bragged about being a seagoing Marine with a Med cruise under his belt. He wouldn't admit that he was affected by the rough voyage, but one evening he got his comeuppance. It happened in the head, which was located under the fantail. He was leaning forward, one hand on the sink, combing his hair when the kid next to him suddenly threw up all over his hand. He took one look at his hand, dashed to the closest GI can and

puked. Unfortunately for him and hilarious to all of us who had suffered his taunts, he wore false teeth. Out they popped, with dinner, into the can along with the former contents of other stomachs. We heard no more old salt talk from him for the rest of the voyage.

LCpl Jim Barber  
USMC, 1958-1962  
Mesa, Ariz.

### I Took a Shut-Eye Flight Home from Vietnam

I was with HMM-362 at Phu Bai, Vietnam, up to and including the disbanding of the squadron in August 1969. About three weeks before disbanding, I went to the flight surgeon requesting something to help me sleep. I was getting short and finding I was having sleeping problems. He gave me some pills and told me these would help. I took a couple and saved the rest for the flight home. In September I flew to Da Nang to the 15th Aeroport (Air Force) to check on a flight out. While waiting, I went over to the SATO office in the terminal and asked what flights were offered. He said, "Prepaid flights anywhere you needed to go after you land in the States." I asked, "How much to fly from San Francisco to Seattle?" It was \$65 regardless of where you wanted to fly. I could fly on any airline so long as there was an available seat. I bought a ticket.

I spent a week on Okinawa relaxing, shopping and just taking it easy. Sergeants had to show up for the 1 p.m. muster every day we were there. After one muster, another squadron mate and I lucked out and turned up on the list to leave Kadena Air Base that evening.

The aircraft was loaded to the max. There were 160 to 175 service personnel on the flight with all their gear on a nonstop flight to Travis Air Force Base in California. It was a long, long flight. After we reached cruising altitude, we were fed a nice meal. I asked my sergeant friend if he would like something to relax and I gave him a sleeping tab and I took one. We slept for 8 ½ hours. I don't advocate sharing medications, but these were sleeping tabs and no prescription was necessary.

We landed at Travis and I found an aircraft going to Seattle and settled in for the ride home.

1stSgt Bruce L. Hansen  
USMC (Ret)  
Elyria, Ohio

### A Literary Meritorious Promotion Board

Fresh back from a Med Cruise in 1986, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines conducted a meritorious board for promotion to sergeant. Each company nominated their top corporals for consideration. The board members consisted of the first sergeants from each company and the battalion sergeant major who chaired the proceeding.

I must say that each company submitted strong candidates. One after another, the nominees successfully negotiated the incessant barrage of questions hurled at them from the imposing senior staff noncommissioned officers, some apparently more nervous than others but not enough to knock any of them out of contention for the prestigious three stripes.

I was the first sergeant from "Charlie" Co. The last corporal to appear before us was from Weapons Co. His first sergeant, Melvin Turner, turned to me and with a wink said, "Watch this, Caruso. He's going to blow them all away." I held my own nominee in slight

favor above the others as did all the first sergeants, but Turner brought the goods this time as his nominee did not disappoint. For privacy and license of prose, I will refer to this nominee as "Corporal Sawyer."

Cpl Sawyer commanded the presence of the room as soon as he walked in, clicked his heels at attention,

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**Turner and I turned to each other immediately. Melvin was trying his best to stifle a chuckle. So was I. Suddenly, Cpl Sawyer's eyes, but not his bearing, signaled he had just realized his mistake. "Sergeant major, I would like to readdress the board and answer the question correctly."**

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and sounded off his report to the board. His military bearing reeked acute confidence as well as a slight hint of swagger. His uniform and military alignment were immaculate. Sawyer's knowledge and military skills were remarkably better than that of his four friends waiting outside in the hallway. He understood the Uniform Code of Military Justice and had mastered the five-paragraph order and land navigation. Whatever we threw at the young corporal he knew the answer. He spat out the correct answers firmly while calmly looking each board member directly in the eye with each response.

I had the last question, and it was a charity one at that. "Corporal Sawyer," I queried, "Name the

first Commandant of the Marine Corps." "The first Commandant of the Marine Corps was Samuel Clemens," Sawyer responded.

Turner and I turned to each other immediately. Melvin was trying his best to stifle a chuckle. So was I. Suddenly, Cpl Sawyer's eyes, but not his bearing, signaled he had just realized his mistake. "Sergeant Major, I would like to readdress the board and answer the question correctly," he pleaded. "Go ahead, Corporal." "The first Commandant of the Marine Corps was Captain Samuel Nicholas." "Thank you, Corporal, you're dismissed," ordered the sergeant major.

Our vote was unanimous for Cpl Sawyer but not without some more antics from the board. "Who the heck is Samuel Clemens?" the sergeant major demanded to know. When Turner and I told him, he sheepishly responded, "I knew that. I knew that."

To this day, I conjure up an image of America's greatest humorist and author in command of the Corps. Mark Twain indeed.

SgtMaj Larry Caruso  
USMC (Ret)  
1969 to 1993  
Wellington, Fla.

### She Wasn't Wrong

During the air campaign portion of Operation Desert Storm, the I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) headquarters was located in an old oil drilling camp near As Saffaniyah, a bit south of Ras al Mishab. It was a nice place to set up from the standpoint of range rings; the Scud missiles were all falling behind us in the port of Al Jubail, and the FROG-7s and BM-21s were all falling just north of us near the Mishab airfield. Finding and destroying long range rockets like the FROG-7s as they came out of hiding in Kuwait after sunset and

set up to fire was a priority of the MEF commanding general. We found them several nights in a row thanks to some great work by the Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron (then called RPV Company) and passed the word to the operations watch, but Ops was finding it hard to get an attack aircraft allocated fast enough to strike the FROG-7s in the open before they returned to their hide sites.

The Iraqi targeting was not good, and no one was really getting hurt by rockets during the first few weeks of the air campaign, but they rattled the place and there was concern they could eventually impact ground maneuver units. I was the senior intel analyst on the night shift and our air/missile order of battle analyst was a young first lieutenant. After several nights of VMU finding the FROG-7s but Ops not destroying them, she gave her usual morning brief to the CG. "The FROG-7s were spotted on the road here at this time, set up at this time, fired at this time, etc., and were able to depart before our air assets were able to engage." Full stop, good brief. Then the CG said to the first lieutenant, "What do you think, Lieutenant?" She replied "General, I think the safest place to be in this battlespace is with the FROG-7s." Needless to say, the Ops CO asked to have a word with me after the brief.

Capt M.H. Decker  
Oceanside, Calif.

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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 membership for the "Sea Story of the Month."* 🐞

# Corps' Power, Water Systems Are Getting Lean and Going Green

By Matt Gonzales

**M**arine Corps Systems Command (MCSC) is developing and fielding new, cutting-edge power and water capabilities to modernize the service and align with the Commandant's vision of the future force where battlefield efficiency will be a priority in supporting the future Marine. "Your forward contact forces that are deterring every day are your fighting forces," General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, said during an Amphibious Warfare Industrial Base Coalition event in February 2020. "They'll be asked to operate in small, distributed groups, capable of taking a location, using it to refuel and re-arm planes, strike a target or move supplies, and then pack up and move to a new location within 48 to 72 hours."

MCSC's power and water modernization efforts will make small Marine units more self-sufficient and less reliant on resupply forces while carrying out missions in remote environments.

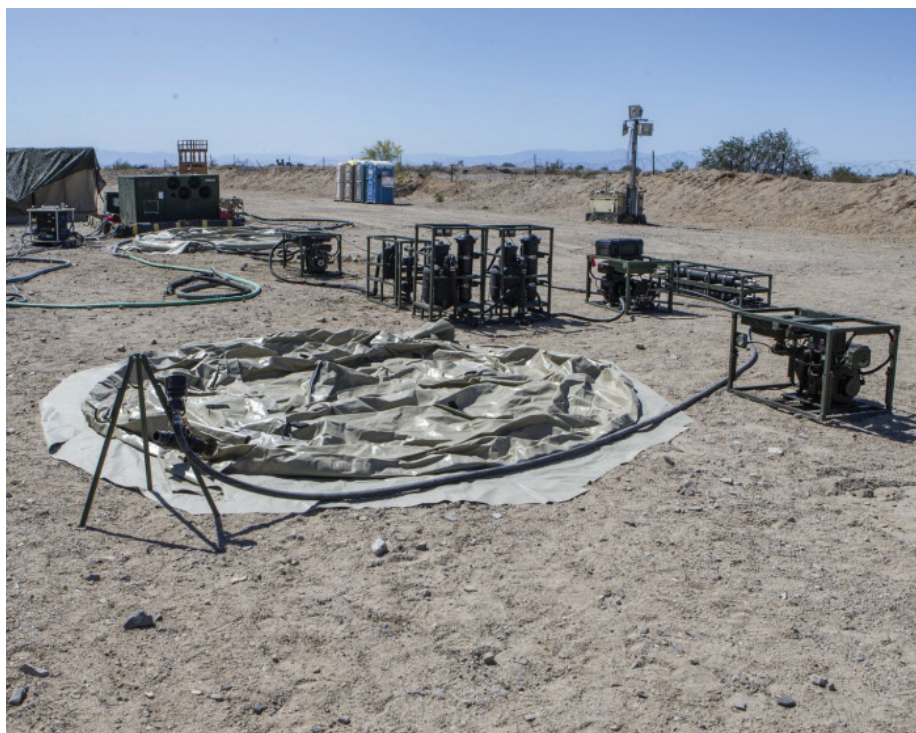
## Small Systems, Big Power

Master Sergeant Keith Hoy, a project officer with the Power Systems Team at MCSC, said their team's latest modernization efforts focus on equipping Marines with lighter and smaller capabilities that improve battlefield mobility. "A big focus of the power team right now is fielding systems that increase efficiency and mobility on the battlefield," said Hoy. "We have several new systems currently fielded or under development designed to meet this vision."

For example, MCSC oversees the Ground Renewable Expeditionary Energy Network System (GREENS)—a man-portable module system with renewable energy collection and storage capabilities that can energize communications equipment, sensors and radios without the need for fuel. GREENS, which MCSC fully fielded to Marines in 2018, collects solar energy and converts it to usable power. The system uses solar panels and rechargeable batteries to provide an average continuous output to sustain equipment and fills capability gaps left by large power generators and batteries. "The GREENS can also be hybridized



**LCpl Anthony Bryan, a water support technician with Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force-Southern Command reviews the chlorine level of recently purified water during a command post exercise at Camp Lejeune, N.C., April 8, 2020. (Photo by Sgt Andy O. Martinez, USMC)**



**A 3,000-gallon water bladder is unfolded by Marines from Combat Logistics Regiment 25 during expeditionary water purification in support of Weapons and Tactics Instructors Course 2-18.**

CPL NATHANIEL S. MCALLISTER, USMC



CPL LEVI SCHULTZ, USMC

**Above: Marines with 3rd Bn, 11th Marine Regiment, display the Ground Renewable Expeditionary Electronics Network System during the Energy Capability Exercise at Camp Wilson, MCAGCC, Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 6, 2016.**

**Right: Combat Logistics Regiment 25 Marines unfold a 3,000-gallon water bladder.**

**Below: A Marine sets up a lightweight water purification system during a command post exercise at Camp Lejeune, N.C. April 8.**



CPL NATHANIEL S. MCALLISTER, USMC



SGT ANDY MARTINEZ, USMC

with generators and vehicle power to provide an intelligent small scale energy management system,” said Hoy.

Hoy also outlined several power systems currently in development, including the Ultra-Lightweight Expeditionary Power System (ULEPS). ULEPS will be a small, portable energy storage unit that allows individual Marines to connect electronic equipment to renewable energy systems and scavenge power from multiple power sources, which will ultimately improve battlefield efficiency.

The Large Energy Storage Unit, another power system under development, will serve as a larger version of ULEPS, providing backup power source to electronic capabilities in the event of a generator malfunction. If a generator shuts off, energy is transferred to the Energy Storage Unit until the generator returns online. These storage systems also allow Marines to turn off one or two generators that would normally be required, saving the Marine Corps in fuel and maintenance parts, said Hoy. “In the past, if a generator spikes, it shuts off,” said Hoy. “With the energy storage unit, Marines won’t have to worry about that because they’ll always have extra power.”

MCSC is also developing the Mobile Electric Hybrid Power System (MEHPS), a trailer-mountable capability that integrates and automatically controls hybrid power systems, generators, batteries and solar panels. The system will conserve fuel by increasing the efficiency of generators through the use of solar panels. When battery energy is depleted, the MEHPS automatically turns on the generator and runs at its optimum efficiency or full-rated power. Any excess power not going to equipment is used to recharge the batteries. MEHPS is scheduled to field in FY24. Hoy said MEHPS and the Energy Storage Units in development will give Marines uninterrupted power to efficiently and effectively complete missions.

### Reducing Carbon Emissions

The Department of Defense has placed an emphasis on decreasing the emission of greenhouse gases. In memorandum released in March, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin said the U.S. military will act immediately to include the security implications of climate change in the United States’ risk analyses, strategy development and planning. “The changing climate is altering the global security and

operating environments, impacting our missions, plans and installations,” said Lloyd.

The development of MEHPS exemplifies the Power Team’s efforts to not only increase battlefield efficiency but also to reduce the Marine Corps’ carbon footprint. MEHPS regulates power from renewable energy, battery arrays and auxiliary sources while managing the power available from each source to minimize fuel consumption. Decreasing fuel consumption leads to the environmental benefit of a reduced carbon footprint.

Hoy said the Power Team is also researching wind energy, newer battery chemistries, turbine generators, hydroelectric generators and other fuel-efficient sources to meet the warfighter’s needs on the battlefield in the future. “The [DOD] views climate change as a threat to national security,” said Hoy. “We are always looking at ways to reduce our carbon footprint.”

### **Battlefield Efficiency And Water Systems**

The Family of Expeditionary Water Systems (FEWS) Team at MCSC has also focused on increasing battlefield efficiency

and mobility. “Current and future operating environments require resilient and stable water production capabilities that have a minimal logistics burden,” said MSgt Matt Foust, project officer of FEWS. “We are developing and delivering water systems targeting smaller units and providing less complex solutions.” One such system is the Platoon Water Purification System (PWPS), a vehicle-transported capability able to produce up to 15 gallons of water per hour at the unit level, allowing Marines to rely less on logistical resupply missions to provide a water capability. The system is scheduled to field later this year. “PWPS produces drinking water from fresh, brackish and saltwater sources to support a group of personnel for up to 30 days,” said Foust.

The Lightweight Water Purification System (LWPS) is a smaller, man-portable capability that provides a multipurpose system for the production of drinkable water for Marines. LWPS enables Marines to purify water from any source, including water contaminated by chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear agents. “This system is essential to providing potable water in a modular format that can support sizes from an infantry

company up to an infantry battalion,” said Foust.

LWPS fielded in 2011 and underwent upgrades in 2017. MCSC is in the early stages of developing the Lightweight Water Purification System 3.0, which provides the increased capability for water purification above the platoon level.

LWPS 3.0’s unique scalability enables Marines to configure the system based on field water requirements, reducing excess weight and logistics footprint for the warfighter. The FEWS team plans to begin verification testing of LWPS 3.0 this summer.

The Water Team constantly focuses on identifying ways to make Marines’ jobs easier in challenging conditions according to Foust. The upcoming water systems help to increase efficiency and mobility on the battlefield, thus reducing the Corps’ logistical burden.

“These water systems will allow Marines to become more self-sufficient, agile and responsive while forward deployed,” said Foust. “That, in turn, helps them focus on their job and achieve mission success in any clime or place.” 🇺🇸



**MSgt Ryan Miller, project officer for Family of Water Systems at Marine Corps Systems Command, assembles the Lightweight Water Purification System with the new Enhanced Production Module. (Photo by Kaitlin Kelly)**



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\*For DAP details reference MARADMIN 279/20



**MARINES**

# Leatherneck Laffs



"The smell of coffee beats a bugle for Reveille any morning."



"Awe, come on, Sergeant. My boots *are* on the ground."

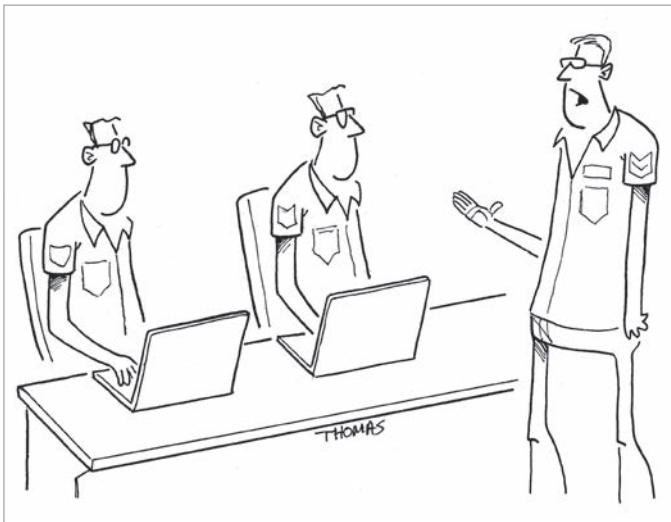


"Not a peep out of either of you!"

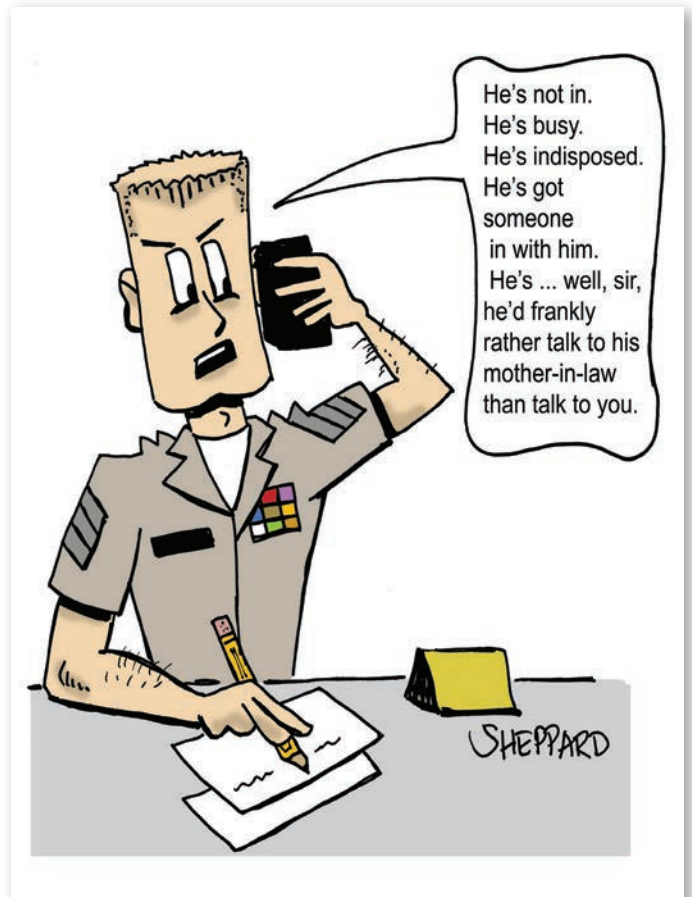


"We're affecting the enemy's morale by bombing their heads."





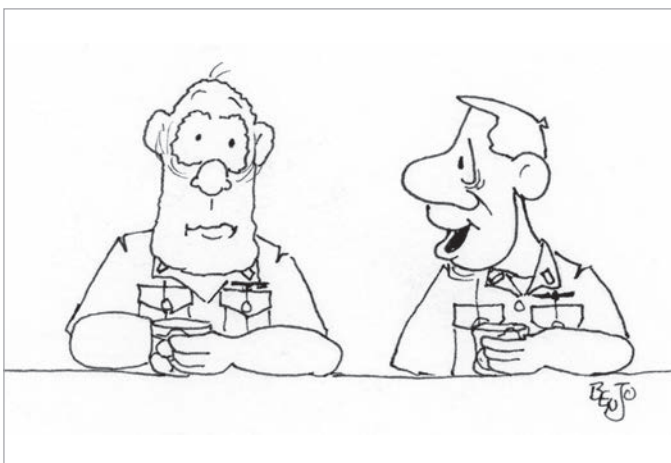
"We removed your firewalls and anti-virus protection. Welcome to survival training."



"It's not a Ghillie suit! I forgot to put a fabric sheet in the dryer."



"Tents are so old-fashioned. I'm searching for a B&B."



"Test pilot, huh?"

# A Few Days in the Life of a Liaison Officer in Vietnam

By Capt Raymond Lee Maloy, USMC (Ret)

**Sgt Ray Maloy aboard ship en route to Vietnam from Camp Pendleton, Calif., 1966, for a tour with 1stMarDiv.**



**I**n 1966, I was a staff sergeant serving as a platoon leader at Chu Lai, Republic of Vietnam, when I received a field commission to second lieutenant. I did not attend Officer Candidates School or The Basic School. Twelve days later, I was ordered to the Da Nang headquarters of the 1st Marine Division (Forward), where we were assuming the Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR) from the 3rd Marine Division, which was displacing north to Phu Bai. Marine commands were in a state of expanding flux. I would serve as the Vietnamese liaison officer to the “Da Nang/Quang

Da Special Sector.” The Vietnamese government had designated Hoa Vang District and parts of Hieu Duc and Dien Ban Districts, south of Da Nang, as “National Priority Area 1,” in the southern half of my bailiwick.

Reporting to the Division Combat Operations Center, I met briefly with our commanding general, Major General Lewis J. Fields, and my reporting senior, Colonel Herman Poggemeyer, the G-3. I was given maps of my area of responsibility, a jeep and driver, radios, codebooks, and the call sign “Puma.” I was then told to go forth and effect liaison. The best advice I received was,

“assume nothing and trust no one.” My immediate task was to become intimately familiar with the area, its history and the terrain, and identify every military, political and civilian organization and personality that might affect the mission and performance of the 1stMarDiv.

I had no idea of the enormity of my assignment, and I suspect that my superiors also underestimated it. Turning loose a second lieutenant with all of 12 days of commissioned service in the second largest city of South Vietnam given its strategic importance and delicate balance of power seemed unusual to me. I could only think of three reasons why I was considered qualified for this job: I had taken a “short course” in Vietnamese, had an independent duty tour as a corporal in Tampa, Fla., and I was jump qualified, which ensured that I could participate in airborne operations if necessary. Another reason could have been my interaction with MajGen Fields before the Division mounted out from Camp Pendleton to Vietnam. I had just returned from the 3rdMarDiv as we were mounting out from Okinawa to Vietnam when I stayed busy as the battalion embarkation noncommissioned officer (NCO). The 1stMarDiv had no one with any real embarkation experience as was painfully clear during displacement conferences at Division headquarters. I had made the “mistake” of offering our experiences in 3rdMarDiv moving to Da Nang. I had received orders for recruiting duty since Marine Corps orders mandated at least a year between WestPac tours. I was called to the commanding general’s office, where he informed me that regardless of my orders, he needed my services, and I would be going with him to Vietnam. I was assigned to Division embarkation during the loading phase, working between San Diego and Long Beach before boarding USS *Talladega* (APA-

208) on Jan. 13, 1966, with the command group at Long Beach. We set sail for the western Pacific after only seven months back home.

Da Nang was just recovering from an attempted coup that lasted from March 23 to May 23, 1966. Premier Ky at first declared the dissident or “struggle forces” to be communist and in control of Da Nang. It was, however, mostly a power grab involving South Vietnamese factions and competing Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) units with U.S. Marines caught in the middle, trying to remain neutral and hoping the government would sort things out so we could get on with the war. This proved to be easier said than done as even Lieutenant General Lewis Walt, Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force, became involved. He confronted dissident forces as they approached Da Nang on the Da Nang River Bridge. When the city finally returned to normal, it was estimated that 150 Vietnamese on both sides were killed and 700 wounded. American casualties were 23 wounded, including 18 Marines.

I obtained an office in the Joint Vietnamese/American Headquarters of the Da

Nang Special Sector located in downtown Da Nang and hung out my “shingle.” The sign on the office door was painted red with a silver Marine Corps emblem and lettering in both Vietnamese and English, proclaiming “Vietnamese Liaison Officer, 1st Marine Division.” A similar sign was on the front of my jeep, which later appeared on a reward pamphlet distributed by the local Viet Cong, but that’s another story.

**My recommendation to the general was that all CAPs throughout I Corps be put under a single new organization and I was somewhat nonplussed by his abruptness. I also thought he was incorrect, so I merely replied, “Sir, I think that’s why some of us are generals and others second lieutenants.”**

I lived and operated with Vietnamese units during operations, providing their link with our command and support. I worked primarily for the G-3 but also with the G-2 and G-5 as needed. Assignments were unbelievably varied and involved not only U.S. Marine units but also Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), Regional Force (RF),

Popular Force (PF) units, U.S. Army and Air Force units, Vietnamese politicians, Combined Action Platoons (CAP), CIA (Air America), Provisional Reconnaissance Platoons (later Phoenix Operations), National Police, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), Revolutionary Development Cadres (RDC) and U.S. civilian contractors. I was occasionally

asked to brief our commanding generals, MajGen Lewis Fields and his relief, MajGen Herman Nickerson.

My first briefing for MajGen Nickerson came just after he assumed command of the Division and, from my immediate perspective, was nothing short of a disaster. He asked me for my assessment of a situation I had reported regarding the combined action platoons, and when I

**This photo shows the bamboo SNCO club at the base camp at Chu Lai, Vietnam, in 1966.**





offered it, he said, “Bulls---, lieutenant, I think this, this, and this. Now what do you think?” Shortly after being assigned, I had discovered that several CAPs whose personnel belonged to the 3rdMarDiv had been left in their villages when the Division moved north to Phu Bai. They, of course, were not being paid and had to scrounge for supplies and ammunition, but as Marines always do, had adapted and continued to operate. My recommendation to the general was that all CAPs throughout I Corps be put under a single new organization and I was somewhat nonplussed by his abruptness. I also thought he was incorrect, so I merely replied, “Sir, I think that’s why some of us are generals and others second lieutenants.” He looked at me for what seemed a very long time, then dismissed me and told me to wait outside. The officer who was scheduling the briefings asked me how it went, and I told him that I would probably be getting a new job. A few minutes later, I was informed that the general agreed with my solution and wanted the recommendation on paper. The CAPs were placed under a “group” commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William R. Corson, who commanded 3rd

Tank Battalion. He spoke fluent Chinese and got along in several other languages, so he seemed like the natural choice. His outstanding book “The Betrayal” should be in every Marine’s collection. I learned that MajGen Nickerson frequently tested the resolve of his officers in this manner.

It was entirely possible for me to spend a day in a horrendous firefight covered

imperatives that were not always in the best interest of our mission.

My office wall maps were updated daily with location overlays of every Vietnamese unit and their patrol routes or operations. This was done primarily to coordinate and clear artillery missions and hopefully avoid civilian casualties in this congested but enemy-infested area. Even the canister

**The many allied organizations operating in my sector had diverse, if not conflicting objectives, and to do the job effectively, I had to be aware of their motivations. This could only be accomplished by spending time with them in operational situations.**

in mud and the next night be invited to a function in an ornate hotel suite sponsored by some civilian or political dignitary. My knowledge of the area and people grew rapidly, and I developed solutions for diverse and never-ending problems. In an environment inhabited by the most senior political figures in I Corps, it was sometimes difficult but critical for me, the most junior officer in Vietnam, to maintain perspective and still do the job effectively while building trust and maintaining relationships with competing egos and suspected traitors. I dealt with

impact location of illumination rounds had to be considered before firing. I became a reliable source of information for the Division staff and field commanders. It was routine for me to assign confidence values to intelligence reports originating with the Vietnamese before passing them on to the Division G-2.

At times, assignments were received from G-3 and occasionally requests from other staff sections, but I usually scheduled activities on my own initiative, doing what I believed necessary to maintain or create trusting relationships and develop

**Left: One of 3rd Amtrac Bn's "nicer" tents at the Chu Lai base camp in 1966.**

**Below: Ray Maloy's quarters at Chu Lai, 1966. Prior to being selected for a field commission, Maloy served as an SNCO.**



information about the area. The many allied organizations operating in my sector had diverse, if not conflicting objectives, and to do the job effectively, I had to be aware of their motivations. This could only be accomplished by spending time with them in operational situations. I would also try to visit each Marine regimental and separate battalion headquarters weekly to assess their problems relating to the Vietnamese and offer assistance if needed. Combined Action Platoons were also on my itinerary. I kept a hotel room in Da Nang and quarters for the driver/radio operator, interpreter and me with the MACV Advisor's in the Hoa Vang District Chief's compound, just across the river, south of the Da Nang Air Base.

What follows are a few days that typified my duties during my first five months from October 1966 to February 1967.

### **The 51st ARVN Regiment**

The 51st Regiment was assigned to National Priority Area 1 in support of the pacification campaign but was making marginal progress. When intelligence reports of enemy presence seemed irrefutable, I would accompany them on sweeps to gauge their effectiveness. Their U.S. advisors, an Army major and Marine gunnery sergeant, believed there were occasional leaks but had faith in their ability to fight. I went along on several sweeps when they were operating independently,

but usually, the enemy vanished before we arrived or left only snipers to make things mildly interesting.

It was a different matter, however, on a joint operation with Marines. We had located and closed with a good-sized NVA force south of Dai Loc, near the "Arizona Territory." Marines were pushing from one side, and units of the 51st approached from

the other. My radio operator, interpreter and I were with the Vietnamese, and the immediate objective was a tree line and a scattering of huts at the edge of a dry rice paddy complex we had to cross. The enemy was being forced to fight, and they chose to fight the ARVN instead of Marines.

As often happened, we were crossing the paddies when the NVA opened up with automatic weapons and RPGs. We took cover behind the miserably short dikes, and the ARVN troopers returned fire like a seasoned unit. I was impressed. They were taking hits but were talking it up and encouraging each other as leaders gave orders. The soldiers began a flanking maneuver as friendly fire built up. Green NVA tracers zipped across the paddy, and tracer elements bounded wildly into the air as rounds chewed up the dikes. One of the problems with tracers is that they work both ways, pinpointing the weapons firing them. Our own machine guns and rifles shifted fire until red tracers found their mark. Green tracers sprayed upward and stopped as enemy gunners took hits. I was already in contact with Marine on-call artillery, and 105s along with ARVN mortars got into the act. Fire was lifted and the flanking troops assaulted through the enemy positions. As the assaulting troops continued to press the NVA and search the huts, we moved into the trees. Bodies littered the



**SSgt Maloy posing at the edge of a sandbagged fighting hole after a training swim in the South China Sea in 1966.**

ground, and I assumed that the reserves had checked to ensure that the dead enemy were, in fact, dead.

We stood around in a gaggle, feeling pretty good when a “dead” NVA soldier rolled over and pressed the trigger on his shiny, new AK-47 on full automatic. He swept it across us, expending the remaining ammo in his 30-round magazine. The noise was deafening, and I figured he fired about 400 rounds. In reality, we had no time to react outwardly, but now he had a problem: unlike his rifle, our weapons were loaded, and he was dispatched with extreme alacrity, prejudice and satisfaction. After regaining our composure, we began looking for bullet holes in each other and found that he had missed all of us. He completely missed us from 20 yards, and all he had to do was point the rifle.

### Attack on “An-Trach (1)”

The hamlet of An-Trach (1) is about 7 miles southeast of Da Nang on the Song Yen River and was one of the “New Life Hamlets,” a designation given by “CORDS” to hamlets removed from enemy control and considered pacified. It was inhabited by people relocated

by CORDS and supplied by USAID. A 59-person Revolutionary Development Cadre (RDC) was stationed there to assist the people in the unfolding of their “new lives.” Security was provided by an ARVN platoon and a reinforced Marine rifle platoon with a 106 mm recoilless rifle, 81 mm mortars and M60 machine-guns. The village was in the TAOR of 1stMarDiv led by Colonel Donald L. Mallory. A continuing procession of American and Vietnamese VIPs paraded through An-Trach to view this “model” of pacification and cooperation between U.S. and RVN agencies, all coming together to promote prosperity and safety for the happily resettled villagers. A large Catholic church had been constructed there with funds donated by the Kennedy family, which added to the perception of success.

Most of the Marines assigned to the village recognized the setup for what it could be and eventually became—a trap! The troops were quartered in large G.P. tents that had been erected in the middle of the perimeter near the church. The recoilless rifle, mortar pit and machine-gun positions were essentially useless in

locations for display and show, not tactical considerations. The Marines rotated into An-Trach for short periods of time, and the more astute leaders would let their men rest during the day and move out on patrol and ambushes at night. But, as fate would have it, a platoon was assigned after a long, hard period of time in the bush. The cots, tents, church and demonstration weapons all combined to produce an appearance of security and safety. The lieutenant allowed his men to “take off their packs” and spend nights in the comfort of the tents, rotating security with the ARVN Platoon.

Since National Priority Area 1 (which included An-Trach 1) was of critical concern, I often found it more expedient to perform my duties from Hoa Vang rather than Da Nang. It was well-known that the 2nd NVA Division, just across the border in Laos, had the mission of investing the city of Da Nang. There were constant battles between the 1stMarDiv and 2nd NVA Div, and the emphasis placed on the area by both the U.S. and RVN is the reason that Da Nang was the only major city not occupied by the NVA during the Tet Offensive. On Nov. 12, 1966, I was



Thanks to typical Marine ingenuity, Marines at Chu Lai constructed a shower made from a 5-gallon water can on a rotating board with wash rack for clothes, two sinks made from pans, and shaving mirrors.



**The chapel at the base camp at Chu Lai in 1966 was constructed primarily of bamboo and was used by both 3rd Amtrac Ban and 1st Recon Co.**

roused from my rack at 3 a.m. to receive a radio message from the Division Combat Operations Center informing me that An-Trach 1 had been hit. The duty officer told me that a radio operator with a mortar crew had been blown out of the pit with his radio. The Marine believed that he was one of a few survivors and that enemy sappers were still in the perimeter. I was tasked with locating and accompanying the Marine company going to their relief and finding out what had happened, especially to the Vietnamese.

It was raining hard and still dark as we approached An-Trach. The roads and trails leading to the hamlet were covered with bamboo trees that had been felled and boobytrapped, so we took to the paddies. We came under small arms fire but quickly maneuvered against and neutralized the delaying force left behind to cover the withdrawal of the main body of enemy troops as they fled across the river. We entered the hamlet as dawn was breaking to discover dead and wounded Marines everywhere.

The two platoon leaders, a Marine lieutenant and an ARVN warrant officer, were dead inside the small concrete building they were using as joint headquarters. The enemy sappers had known the exact location of these two officers' cots, and while they slept, placed explosive charges outside the building against the wall, precisely next to their heads and detonated them. The Marine tents were blown to shreds by satchel charges, and the Marines sleeping inside on cots were killed or wounded. Mortar

pits, machine-gun, and recoilless rifle positions also received satchel charges and blocks of C4 or TNT. The hamlet was empty. All of the villagers and Revolutionary Development Cadre were gone, as was every member of the ARVN platoon, with the exception of their dead platoon leader.

In the wet grass, we found trails made by the infiltrating sappers as they wormed their way through the defensive wire and crawled past abandoned ARVN positions. It was an obvious setup with everyone in the village except for the Marines aware of the attack. The entire operation was over in a few minutes and was the most destructive, well-coordinated assault by sappers I had seen. Of the 57 Marines in An-Trach 1, a total of 16 were killed and 28 wounded. Many unexploded charges were lying around on the ground, and we

**A helicopter landed and out charged the CG of the 3rd MAF, LtGen Walt. He raged like a maddened bull through the rain and mud, kicking debris out of his path. ... Ignoring the "chain of command," as he frequently did, the general demanded to know, "Who put these Marines in such exposed, vulnerable positions?"**

found the bodies of three Viet Cong. The rest of the enemy had escaped with the mortar tubes, machine-guns, some rifles and as much ammunition as they could carry. Greed would be their downfall. They were overloaded, and our saturation patrols were able to locate and kill many of them.

We took care of the wounded, but there

was little else we could do except to gently move our dead Marines out of the rain to the shelter of the church and cover them with ponchos. To me, there is nothing more heart-rending than this scene that replays over and over in every war: Marine boots protrude from a line of ponchos while buddies go through the painful process of identifying and mourning the closest friends they would ever have.

At about 8 a.m., a helicopter landed and out charged the CG of the 3rd MAF, LtGen Walt. He raged like a maddened bull through the rain and mud, kicking debris out of his path. We were astonished when he booted an unexploded charge, apparently not recognizing it for what it was.

Ignoring the "chain of command," as he frequently did, the general demanded to know, "Who put these Marines in such exposed, vulnerable positions?" In the end, it made no difference that his 3rd MAF staff, in cooperation with CORDS and U.S. Army General William C. Westmorland's notion of pacification in this high priority area, had given tacit approval to this display of troops and weapons for maximum public relations impact rather than tactical considerations. None of this, however, provided cover for the hapless company commander of the dead Marines, who was relieved of his command.

#### **"Please Help My Mother ..."**

The Vietnamese S-3 of the Da Nang Special Sector told me that an ARVN sergeant had a request for me. It seemed that his father had been an active government supporter in his village of Tu Cao. As frequently happened, the Viet Cong had entered the village during the night

to publicly torture, kill and then bury his father's head down in a narrow hole. It was a typical object lesson by the communists to intimidate the rest of the villagers. The sergeant's mother had somehow been overlooked by the V.C., but now he was concerned for her safety and wanted me to help get her out of there.

Tu Cao was a nasty little village com-

**Capt Ray Maloy and 1st Sgt Clay, Co B, 1st Amtrac Bn in 1970 after the company returned from Vietnam.**

plex of four hamlets, located in a bend of the Vinh Dien River southwest of Marble Mountain and known mostly for its boobytraps. This was not an area where anyone would want to venture alone, so I borrowed a patrol from Lieutenant Colonel Van D. Bell's 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, since Tu Cao was in his TAOR. Thus supported, the sergeant and I set out with a platoon-sized patrol to retrieve his mother. Nearing the village, we were forced by dense vegetation onto a trail leading to a scattering of huts among the prevalent bamboo thickets. We weren't concerned about running into a force of Viet Cong during the day, but boobytraps were another matter. The patrol leader and I had already decided that we would drop off pairs of Marines to watch our back trail on the way into the village.

The sergeant led us to his family's hut, and the Marines, with the professional skill that comes from combat experience, deployed quickly to form a perimeter defense without orders. His mother was small, sun-darkened and weathered, with long black hair highlighted with gray strands. She was barefoot, wearing the traditional "black pajamas," and carried a conical, rice-straw hat. She seemed surprised to see her son, and when the sergeant said that he was there to move her, she defiantly resisted. Her composure soon dissolved, however, and she began to cry as she watched the Marines gather her meager possessions. Four men could



foreigners, the woman's pitiful keening increased as she viewed her burning past with the realization that she could never return. Now, like so many people in Vietnam and other places where the hollow promises of communist revolution and ethnic conflict have destroyed so many lives, she would have to accept the fact that the village which had sustained her life was now too hostile and dangerous to return.

As we moved out, rifle shots from one of our back-trail teams heightened our awareness and provided a little momentary anxiety, but there was no return fire. Our men, including the team that fired the shots, had remained concealed in place

ment back with us, so I could turn his body over to the ARVN. They quickly identified him and uncovered his support network among the villagers. I took the sergeant and his mother back to Da Nang and never saw them again.

#### **Strange Coincidence Department**

In the early evening on Christmas Eve of 1966, at the Hoa Vang District Chief's compound, the rain was pounding down as only it can in Southeast Asia. My driver was in the jeep checking the radio in preparation for our drive to Da Nang for a holiday function to which I had been invited. Holiday or not, neither of us was looking forward to a ride in the dark. I

was cursing the rain while getting extra ammo for my sawed-off Savage automatic 12-gauge shotgun. My father had sent it to me through the mail, and I sawed off the barrel at the handguard, removed the magazine plug to allow for an extra round and used all brass military ammunition. It was a great weapon for the type of situations I faced. I also had my shoulder-holstered .45-caliber. My driver rushed through the door exclaiming, "Lieutenant, I think a plane just went down in the village."

Running outside, we could see a glowing fire throughout the rain not too far away. Driving toward the flames, we began to pass dazed, crying people and smashed, burning buildings. A large four-engine jet had skipped on its belly through Hoa Vang Village, destroying entire blocks of flimsy

**She seemed surprised to see her son, and when the sergeant said that he was there to move her, she defiantly resisted.**

**Her composure soon dissolved, however, and she began to cry as she watched the Marines gather her meager possessions.**

**Four men could carry everything she owned in the world.**

carry everything she owned in the world. We needed to get out of there, but the tearful little woman kept rushing back to the hut as we formed on the trail. The grim-faced, determined sergeant made must what have been a painful decision. Without hesitation, he set fire to the empty little dirt-floored, bamboo framed and thatched hut in which he was born. Shuffling along to an uncertain future with the son in a formation of helmeted

to rejoin us as we approached. They had observed a man with a rifle placing three rocks in the trail, indicating the universal Viet Cong warning signs of a boobytrap or mine, then kneel in the road and dig a hole, remove an explosive device from his pack that turned out to be a ChiCom "bouncing betty." At that point, they shot him. The Viet Cong was dead, next to his handiwork, when we got there. We brought the unlucky soldier and his equip-



houses as it disintegrated, leaving only its burning engines and part of the flight deck about 200 yards from our compound. The crew of the Flying Tiger cargo-configured 707 was killed along with more than 125 people in the village. Many more people and buildings would have been destroyed had the downpour not confined the fires.

After reporting the crash to the Division Combat Operations Center, I made arrangements for peripheral security with the 1st Marines. The VC loved to take advantage of just such incidents to create hate and discontent, or maybe add a few mortar or sniper rounds to the confusion. The Division G-5, Colonel Walter "Mu Mu" Moore, arrived shortly with assistance, and we spent the rest of the night and most of Christmas Day helping the injured and removing bodies from the debris.

Years later, at Camp Pendleton, I was a bachelor captain assigned as an Infantry School company commander. On Christmas Eve 1971, exactly five years from the date of the crash, I arrived at the

base quarters of my future wife's parents, Col George K. and Jana Reid, where I was to meet their daughter, Cheyenne, who was visiting from San Francisco. During the usual get acquainted blind date conversation, I learned that she had been a flight attendant for Flying Tiger Airline. Since my only contact with that airline had been the crashed plane, I recounted the earlier Christmas Eve story. The look of astonishment on the faces of Cheyenne and her parents was immediate. She had been engaged to the pilot in command, Captain Frank Hawkins, when he died in Hoa Vang Village that night.

### Effective Liaison

In spite of the sanctuaries allowed to the enemy in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, we were winning the war on every front. Infantry regiments and battalions, with all supporting arms, were beating the North Vietnamese Army and VC regiments decisively throughout Vietnam and demonstrating strong tactical leadership. My admiration for our young

Marines is boundless. If fired upon, an immediate, aggressive, relentless assault was guaranteed. I never saw them fail to do their duty. But the fact is, my duties as a liaison officer were defined by numerous problems that arose every day and had to be solved quickly without a manual or orders to follow. The keys to effective liaison are initiative and close contact with all military and civilian officials involved to allow quick, accurate assessments and decisions. Liaison officers and goals should be determined and contact established prior to entering the area if at all possible and enhanced throughout the operation or occupation and beyond.

*Editor's note: All photos are courtesy of Capt Ray Maloy, U SMC (Ret).*

*Author's bio: Ray Maloy served on active duty from 1956-1976 in numerous assignments including six overseas tours. After retiring from the Marine Corps, he formed Equitec Development Corporation with a mission of property development and management.* 🇺🇸



**Retired Marine Capt Ray Maloy and his wife enjoying their retirement in Alabama.**

# Major General Smedley Butler

## How a Legendary Marine Thwarted a Planned Coup d'État

By SSgt Joseph Holman, USMC

*Editor's note: The following article is the third-place winner of the 2021 Leatherneck Writing Contest. Major Richard A. "Rick" Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest, which is open to enlisted Marines through the Marine Corps Association. Upcoming issues of Leatherneck will feature honorable mention entries.*

Smedley Butler is one of the first names learned by recruits in the Marine Corps. "Two Marines, two medals" is the ditty associated with this iconic Marine as recruits are taught that Smedley Butler is among the few courageous and selfless individuals whose actions earned him the prestigious award twice. There is a lesser-known story involving Butler, one where an alleged plot to stage a coup d'État involved the conspirators attempting to convince Major

General Butler to lead in their plot.

Before going into the details of the story, it is important to know more about who Smedley Butler was. This can help understand why he was approached for this plan and why he reacted the way he did to the planned coup d'État.

Smedley Butler was born on July 30, 1881, in Pennsylvania where he was later appointed a second lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps in May 1898. During his time in the Marine Corps, he participated



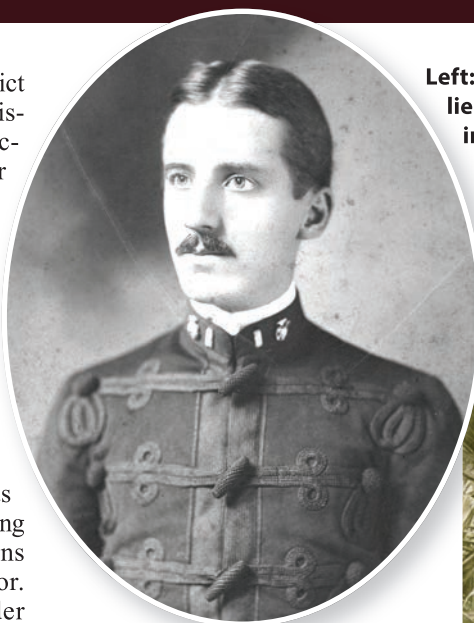
Smedley Butler arrives to inspect the Marine Barracks at Shanghai, China, in 1927.

in many battles including his first conflict which was the same year of his commission. Second Lieutenant Butler participated in the Spanish-American War and later received his promotion to first lieutenant in April 1899 before being assigned to a Marine battalion in Manila. Butler's next conflict would come in June 1900 when he was wounded during the Battle of Tientsin. He was promoted to captain, by Brevet Rank, for his conduct during the battle. In only two years, Butler managed to rise two ranks.

Butler continued to do tours overseas until 1907 when he was placed on recruiting duty. On April 22, 1914, Butler's actions earned him his first Medal of Honor. Butler was the battalion commander during the intervention at Vera Cruz, Mexico, where he was again noted for his "distinguished conduct in battle." At the end of the year, Butler reported to the 1st Brigade in Philadelphia, but he shortly departed to join in the Haitian Campaign. During this campaign, Butler again displayed leadership and courage. On Nov. 17, 1915, Butler led Marines through a small opening in a fort during an attack that turned into hand-to-hand combat with all enemy combatants killed, which led to his second Medal of Honor. After that, he was not involved in combat for the rest of his service, but he continued to excel as a leader within the Marine Corps. At the time of his retirement, he was the most decorated Marine to have ever served. After his retirement in 1931, Butler ventured into politics.

### The Business Plot

Following his retirement, Butler began giving speeches and lectures around the nation, becoming known for his advocacy of veterans and animosity against war and how the U.S. was handling it at the time. Butler even wrote a short book in 1935 entitled "War Is A Racket," which was based on speeches he had been giving in the years prior. The highly experienced and decorated MajGen Butler made it known that he was against war, against servicemembers being sent to fight so some select individuals and businesses could profit. In 1934, after Butler had made this stance known, he reported to the FBI that some leaders of the American Legion approached him with the intent for him to lead an army of 500,000 men to stage a coup, removing President Franklin D. Roosevelt and helping install a dictator. Butler also mentioned that the effort allegedly would have the blessings and funding from some big businesses within



**Left: Smedley Butler was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1898. His service was interrupted in the mid-1920s when he temporarily left the Marine Corps to serve as the director of public safety for the city of Philadelphia, Pa. During Butler's exemplary career, he received the Medal of Honor twice.**



**Above: Capt Smedley Butler fought in the Battle of Tientsin and was promoted to captain for his conduct during the battle. This photo was taken in China in 1901.**

the U.S., which would become known as "The Business Plot."

According to Butler's accounts, he was first approached by Gerald MacGuire, a commander for the American Legion's Connecticut detachment and a Wall Street bond salesman. Butler's accounts of the meetings say that MacGuire disguised his intentions when approaching him, seeming to only want Butler's support regarding veterans' issues. He showed Butler his bank statements that amounted to \$2 million in today's economy, enough to bring veterans to an American Legion



**Marine officers at Vera Cruz, Mexico, in 1914. Shown, left to right are, Capt F.H. DeLario, SgtMaj John H. Quick, LtCol Wendell C. Neville, Col John A. Lejeune, and Maj Smedley D. Butler.**

convention. Throughout the meetings, MacGuire's intentions were revealed. MacGuire discussed his negative views of President Roosevelt's policies, specifically his "separation from the gold standard" and his New Deal policies, when it came to the relief for the poor and unemployed and the reform of the financial system. Later, MacGuire finally became comfortable enough with Butler to reveal that he wanted Butler to lead an army of veterans for a coup d'état.

Butler reported that MacGuire mentioned the group of wealthy parties that were backing this plan. This included Robert Sterling Clark, who had a \$30 million net worth as an heir of the Singer sewing machine fortune. Clark was more forward about his intentions, particularly expressing displeasure with Roosevelt's handling of the gold standard. Butler stated that once approached about leading the army, he pretended that he was in agreement with their plans and only went along with it to try to gather as much information as he could before passing information along to the FBI. This included the plans for obtaining supplies for the army including obtaining weapons and ammunition from Remington Arms Co., a company partially controlled by one of the supporting families.

Butler enlisted the aid of Paul Comly French, a reporter for the *Philadelphia Record*, to be a second witness for the claims being made by MacGuire and the co-conspirators. Once Butler felt he had enough information, he finally declined the offer from MacGuire, stating to him, "If you get 500,000 soldiers advocating for anything smelling of Fascism, I am going to get 500,000 more and lick the hell out of you, and we will have a real war right here at home." Following that, he contacted the FBI to present all the evidence he had and then headed to Congress to testify under oath.

### Outcome

What followed when Butler presented the evidence was confusion on how to best proceed with the information given. Paul French's testimony was able to corroborate the story Butler presented. Initially, Butler's report to Congress was not very well-received. Despite the evidence he brought, many of his statements were

thrown out of consideration. Once French and MacGuire gave their testimony, more investigations into the planned coup d'état were initiated; however, the final report was still not ideal. It stated that it was very likely that all of the claims could be facts and that there were indeed "certain persons" who were making an attempt to establish a fascist organization in the country. The report also said, "There is no question that these attempts were discussed, were planned, and might have been placed in execution when and if the



**Smedley Butler poses with bulldogs Bill, Sergeant Thunder and Jiggs II, as they watch the football game at Franklin Field in Philadelphia, Pa., between the Quantico Marines and the American Legion All Stars on Armistice Day in 1930.**

financial backers deemed it expedient." Despite this statement and the evidence, a Congressional committee stated in their first report that they saw no reason to bring in any of the other alleged conspirators for questioning and decided to omit their names in the final report to avoid the bad publicity.

With all the evidence and the testimony given to further help the case Butler was making, nothing was done by the committee. Even President Roosevelt was dismissive of the plot. The case was mostly swept under the rug, and names of the wealthy and prestigious people who were said to be connected to the case were omitted. The president himself even had transcripts

from the hearing suppressed from the public. Freedom of Information Act requests were made to the FBI for files on MacGuire but were returned with "no responsive documents," despite the file the FBI released around the time of the case for Butler having numerous references to MacGuire. While there was some agreement through the intelligence provided that there was a plot for a coup d'état, the agreement ended there. Since it was never went beyond the planning stage and seemed far from execution, the committee

saw no need for any action to be taken. Butler was ridiculed by some of the media, saying that it was nothing but a hoax. MacGuire passed away just a month after the case was concluded, which his doctor stated was due to a combination of pneumonia and poor health due to the accusations. Many documents regarding this case were not released until decades later.

In the end, no one was prosecuted in this case. Butler's outstanding service in combat and his later political stances likely made him seem like the ideal candidate for MacGuire and his vocal support of veterans and his combat experience made him seem ideal to lead an army of veterans. His stances regarding war profiteering and the government's role in it likely also played a part. Despite his criticisms, Butler stated he felt a duty to take the opportunity to gather as much information as he could before he declined the proposal and exposed the plot. Even to this day, there has been no outright statement as to whether it was all factual or not, despite the evidence.

Regardless, Smedley Butler believed he saw a threat to his country, and he did what he thought was right while showing the courage and fierce spirit that earned him his decorations by boldly stating that he was prepared to bring an equal force back at the conspirators and give them a war to protect his country.

*Editor's note: All photos are courtesy of Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections.*

*Author's bio: SSgt Joseph Holman is from Lexington, S.C. He enlisted in May 2010 and his MOS is 3432 Disbursing. He is currently a recruiter in Battle Creek, Michigan, for RSL ansing.*

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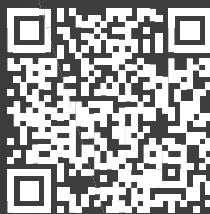
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# LAND OF THE FREE

## Citing Lifelong Sense of Service, Three Veterans Seek to Inspire Others to Give Back

By Sara W. Bock

Each November on Veterans Day, the palatial Pacific Palms Resort in Los Angeles County's City of Industry rolls out the red carpet to welcome a diverse crowd of attendees from golfers and corporate sponsors to wounded warriors, Medal of Honor recipients and representatives from charitable organizations that support military servicemembers, veterans and their families. The day kicks off with the Land of the Free Foundation's annual Veterans Day Golf Classic on the resort's adjacent course

and ends with a gala dinner. Held annually since 2007 in conjunction with the City of Industry's Veterans Day Celebration—which lends a touch of pomp and circumstance by bringing Air Force flyovers, Marine Corps bands and Army helicopter landings—the event has raised more than \$1 million each year for organizations that serve veterans and military families. The foundation, which was launched that same year, has been able to contribute well over \$15 million to those organizations to date.

**Top: Land of the Free Foundation founders Ed Roski, John Semcken and Kent Valley host the first annual Land of the Free Foundation Veterans Day Golf Classic at the Pacific Palms Resort in Los Angeles County, Calif., in 2007. Held in conjunction with a local Veterans Day event, the tournament features sights like the military aircraft flyover pictured here.**

While the Land of the Free Foundation is relatively new, its genesis was set in motion nearly six decades ago in December 1962, when newly commissioned Marine second lieutenants Ed Roski and Kent Valley arrived at The Basic School in Quantico, Va.



**Above left: Semcken, Roski and Valley present an award during the annual Land of the Free Foundation dinner following the Veterans Day Golf Classic, Nov. 11, 2019.**



**Above right: As a young Marine lieutenant, Roski was awarded two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star for his actions during Operation Starlite in Vietnam.**

But while the Land of the Free Foundation is relatively new, its genesis was set in motion nearly six decades ago in December 1962, when newly commissioned Marine second lieutenants Ed Roski and Kent Valley arrived at The Basic School in Quantico, Va., for officer training. Their friendship was an instantaneous one: the pair met in the parking lot on their very first day, and they've been virtually inseparable ever since.

During an April interview with *Leatherneck*, Roski and Valley talked about their arrival at TBS—Roski from the University of Southern California and Valley from the University of Idaho—and how Roski had the foresight to figure out where the bar was in advance, inviting Valley to join him there for a beer after class.

“We got up there [the bar] before everybody else, so I realized that I would keep following Ed,” Valley said with a laugh.

He did just that. Upon completion of TBS, both young lieutenants were assigned as infantry officers with the 1st Marine Brigade at Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, where they reported in June 1963 as platoon commanders with 1st Battalion, 4th Marines—Roski with “Alpha” Company and Valley with “Bravo.”

“We spent lots of time in the O-Club and let the sergeants train the troops,” Valley jokes. But the moment they’d trained for arrived just two years later, on Feb. 21, 1965, as the U.S. prepared to enter the war in Vietnam. Both Roski and Valley left Hawaii and headed for Okinawa, Japan, where they “reloaded, retrained and did some guerrilla warfare training,” Valley recalled. They both arrived at Chu Lai, Vietnam, on May 7, 1965.

During Operation Starlite, the first major offensive by American troops in Vietnam, Roski, who at the time was attached to Ontos Company, was wounded and returned



**Ed Roski visits with Marines manning a static display during the City of Industry’s annual Veterans Day celebration, which is held at the Pacific Palms Resort alongside the Land of the Free Foundation’s Golf Classic and dinner.**



**Valley, Semcken and Roski present a gift of appreciation to Navy CAPT Roger L. Meyer, the keynote speaker at the dinner that followed the 2012 Land of the Free Foundation Veterans Day Golf Classic.**

home to the Los Angeles area after being awarded two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star for his actions during the battle. In 1966, he went to work at Majestic Realty Co., founded by his father, who had served in the Navy during World War II. The following year, Valley, who had finished his tour in Vietnam and was assigned to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego before leaving active duty, joined Roski at Majestic, where the duo, now both in their 80s, continue to work together today: Roski as owner, president and chairman of the board, and Valley as executive vice president and senior development partner.

Neither Roski nor Valley makes any mention of their professional success or lists any accolades during the interview—not even the specific actions that led to Roski’s Bronze Star. They choose instead to focus on their fundraising efforts and how they hope that others might be inspired to find ways, both large and small, to support those who serve or have served.

But they do take the time to credit the Marine Corps for setting them up for success.

“I believe that our Marine Corps ‘can do’ training and hard work led to much of the success of Majestic Realty Co.,” said Valley.

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**A golfer participating in the 2013 Veterans Day Golf Classic visits with Marines while supporting the Land of the Free Foundation’s mission to raise at least \$1 million each year to distribute to organizations that support veterans and military families.**



the U.S., Majestic Realty Co. owns, manages and leases approximately 80 million square feet of property nationwide. Roski, a billionaire whose name appeared at No. 115 on the Forbes 400 in 2020 and is a minority owner of the Los Angeles Lakers and Los Angeles Kings, also is a lifelong adventurer who has climbed to the base camps at Mount Everest, K2 and Mount Kilimanjaro; visited the wreck of the Titanic in a Russian submarine; and bicycled across countries like Russia, Mongolia and Myanmar.

For the pair of Vietnam War veterans, their connections and high visibility have granted them the opportunity, on a large scale, to continue to fulfill the “lifelong sense of service” that has defined them over the decades that have passed since they last wore the uniform.

“The time we spent on active duty in the United States Marine Corps shaped our lives to respect others and give back to those in need as we have been blessed,” Valley said. “Quite frankly it’s more rewarding for us. We remain more connected to the military community than we otherwise would—to really understand what’s happening to the guys and girls on the front line.”

The two Marines aren’t the only veterans behind the Land of the Free Foundation. In 1995, former U.S. Navy pilot John Semcken walked into an interview at Majestic Realty Co., hoping to lead the development of the STAPLES Center, a behemoth sports and entertainment arena in Los Angeles. The 1978 United States Naval Academy grad flew the F-14 on deployments in the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans, completed U.S. Navy Fighter Weapons School, better known as Top Gun, and later was “voluntold” to work as the Navy’s technical advisor for the 1986 blockbuster film “Top Gun” starring Tom Cruise.

“I did that and it kind of changed my life,” said Semcken, who served as a naval aviator for eight years and made a brief cameo appearance in “Top Gun,” singing “You’ve Lost that Loving Feeling” alongside Cruise and actor Anthony Edwards. After he finished working on the movie’s production, Semcken was contacted by ABC and was asked to work as a technical advisor for the World War II-era miniseries “War and Remembrance.”

“They offered me more money than I ever thought existed, so I got out of the Navy,” said Semcken, who moved to Los Angeles shortly thereafter. But the film industry turned out to not be the right fit for Semcken, who missed the military experience “where everybody’s working as a team to reach a goal,” he said. He began working in real estate and competed against Roski on a major deal—which he lost—and soon joined Majestic in 1996, where he continues to work today as senior vice president and senior development partner.



**Left: Valley served as a platoon commander with 1/4 in Vietnam before leaving active duty and joining Roski at Majestic Realty Co.**

**Below: Semcken is shown here during his days as an F-14 Tomcat pilot in the Navy.**



**Pictured with the cast of the movie “Top Gun,” Semcken, standing on the far left, was a technical advisor for the film while still an active-duty naval aviator.**

Hiring Semcken was a no-brainer for Roski, who says that the two connected over their shared military experiences and have “been partners ever since.”

“The first meeting was about two hours long and we never talked one second about real estate. It was all about the Marines and the Navy,” recalled Semcken.

Roski, Valley and Semcken had long been involved in philanthropy and fundraising as individuals, but in 2007, a phone call from an old friend Roski and Valley had served with in Vietnam led them to contemplate what they might be able to accomplish for their fellow veterans if they

**“I believe that our Marine Corps ‘can do’ training and hard work led to much of the success of Majestic Realty Co.”—Kent Valley**

**Right: The Pacific Palms Resort, which is owned by Roski and Semcken, is located adjacent to the golf course in Los Angeles County's City of Industry where the Land of the Free Foundation hosts its annual classic.**

**Below: Marines in uniform are a common sight during the annual Veterans Day Celebration and Golf Classic at the Pacific Palms Resort.**



combined their efforts. Major General Mike Myatt was serving on the board of directors for the Semper Fi Fund and appealed to the real estate developers for support.

“The guys coming back from Iraq at the time were having a really hard time,” Semcken recalls the general saying. “In his words, they were getting ‘blown up’ and there wasn’t enough money to take care of them. Ed has a hotel that has a golf course, and he, Kent and I all got in a room together and said, ‘We’ve got to do something. We need to raise money to help these guys and their families.’ And we took the line from the last line of the National Anthem, ‘land of the free and the home of the brave,’ and that’s how it came to be.”

The Land of the Free Foundation’s mission is straightforward: “Supporting the men and women of the armed services, past, present and future, and their families, who work and sacrifice every day so that we always live in the land of the free.”

And while the annual golf classic and dinner—paid for entirely by Roski, Valley and Semcken—raises the majority of Land of the Free’s funds with entry fees and sponsorships that range from \$2,500 to more than \$50,000, the foundation also solicits donations on its website throughout the year through a donation portal and an online store. Every single dollar the foundation raises is passed down directly to veteran-related charities that are hand-selected by Roski, Valley and Semcken.

There’s no formal selection process for beneficiaries, but the three—who receive far more requests than they’re able to fill—spend the entire year reviewing requests, interviewing new applicants and selecting



**Valley, Semcken and Roski come together for a photo during the 2012 Land of the Free Foundation Veterans Day Golf Classic. The trio of veterans, friends and colleagues put their heads together in 2007 to find a way to use their connections and resources to benefit veterans and military families during the height of the war in Iraq, and the Land of the Free Foundation was born.**



Participants ready their golf carts to commence an annual Veterans Day Golf Classic hosted by the Land of the Free Foundations on the lush grounds of the Pacific Palms Resort.



beneficiaries, whose representatives are presented with checks during the annual foundation dinner following the golf tournament. In order to meet the foundation's criteria, organizations must spend at least 85 percent of donated funds on programming.

"I challenge anybody to look at who we've given money to over the years, to find one that wasn't really doing it right," said Semcken.

The Land of the Free Foundation supports what it considers "priority organizations" like Semper Fi Fund & America's Fund, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) and the Medal of Honor Foundation, as well as smaller organizations that support veterans and their families. The foundation has given vital funding to the Marines Memorial Association, the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation, Troops to College, and dozens of others—approximately 75 in total.

Their primary focus has and continues to be "the families and the guys at the tip of the spear," Semcken said. but they also give particular consideration to organizations that address veteran homelessness, education and PTSD.

The Semper Fi Fund, founded in 2003 by a group of

Marine Corps spouses at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., began by supporting wounded, ill and injured Marines and Sailors and their families, both financially and through various programs, and has since expanded to supporting all branches of the armed forces with the addition of "America's Fund" to its name. The highly rated charity has been a major recipient of funds from the Land of the Free since its inception.

"Founders Ed, Kent and John have brought the patriotic community together. Their annual event has become a Veterans Day institution in Los Angeles—a yearly tribute—where love of our country, pride in our flag and

**The Land of the Free Foundation's mission is straightforward: "Supporting the men and women of the armed services, past, present and future, and their families, who work and sacrifice every day so that we always live in the land of the free."**

**“I want to get the word out that you all can do something,” Roski said. “We really want people to think, ‘We could do that!’ ”—Ed Roski**



**Each year, the staff of the Pacific Palms Resort creates elaborate ice sculptures for the foundation’s dinner. In 2007, the sculptures pictured here commemorated the 10th anniversary of the Land of the Free Foundation.**

support of our military are celebrated and cherished,” said Karen Guenther, founder and CEO of Semper Fi Fund and America’s Fund, in a statement to *Leatherneck*. “Ed, Kent and John have become part of our SF&AF family. They have continued their support over the years to make sure our mission continues—that no servicemember will be forgotten on their road to recovery and that they will experience the love and appreciation of the American people. Our servicemembers and their families are thriving in ways they otherwise wouldn’t have, thanks to their unwavering support.”

Land of the Free also greatly values and supports the efforts of TAPS, led by president, founder and Gold Star spouse Bonnie Carroll, which provides a 24/7 support network and connections to resources for surviving loved ones of fallen military servicemembers. The generosity of Roski, Valley and Semcken does not go unnoticed.

“John Semcken, Ed Roski and Kent Valley are true American patriots,” Carroll said of the Land of the Free’s founders. “They have served, and they continue to serve, raising millions of dollars to support mission critical military charities like TAPS and the Semper Fi Fund. The families of our nation’s fallen heroes have felt the impact of their steadfast, selfless support and we are profoundly grateful to them!”

During the annual dinner, the foundation honors groups

like Medal of Honor recipients, World War II veterans and recovering combat-wounded servicemembers, and Roski, Valley and Semcken present large checks to the charities and organizations they’ve chosen to support. It’s been a unique opportunity for them to expose their friends and other members of the greater Los Angeles community to the men and women who serve and have served and solicit their support.

Gone are the days when Los Angeles was a large military hub, said Semcken, referencing the closures of various military installations that previously occupied large swaths of the sprawling county. “The people in Los Angeles, they couldn’t tell the difference between an Air Force general and an Army private, but they all are very patriotic. This is a very expensive golf tournament, and every year it’s sold out. We’re amazed that people even though the wars are kind of slowing down, they all recognize that the need doesn’t,” he added, referencing their personal friends and corporations that have rallied around their cause and made generous contributions to the foundation.

As they share the story of their efforts to give back, all three veterans emphasize their hope that others will join them in finding ways, in their own communities, to support the men and women of the armed forces, past, present and future.

“I want to get the word out that you all can do something.”



**Roski, Valley and Semcken present a \$100,000 donation to TAPS founder and president Bonnie Carroll during the 2011 Land of the Free Foundation dinner on Veterans Day. From the foundation's inception, worthy organizations like TAPS and Semper Fi Fund have been the primary recipients of the funds raised during the golf tournament.**

Roski said. "We really want people to think, 'We could do that!'"

"Everyone has different capacities to do it," said Semcken. "We've been rather lucky, so we have a bigger capacity, but everybody has the ability to do it. We would love if our story just encouraged somebody else to do what we did."

After a challenging year that forced the cancellation of the Land of the Free Foundation's annual dinner due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the modification of the golf tournament to meet health and safety protocols, the event—or lack thereof—still managed to raise \$1 million in support of the organizations that work tirelessly to ensure that the unique needs of veterans and military families are met. Roski, Valley and Semcken call to mind the lessons they learned from serving in the Navy and Marine Corps and say that they continue to apply them today.

"This year is a perfect example. You never know what's coming over the hill or whether the ship is sailing into a storm," said Semcken. "We're kind of perpetually prepared."

"Never stop until you've reached your objective," Valley added.

*Editor's note: All photos courtesy of Land of the Free Foundation. Sara W. Bock has written previously about TAPS and the Semper Fi Fund. To learn more, visit the Leatherneck online archives to read "Keeping Up With the Terrain: Over 15 years, Semper Fi Fund Founders Adapt Mission as Needs Evolve," and the two-part article: "Survivors Helping Survivors Heal: TAPS Provides Peer Support, Resources and Comfort in Tragedy."*



**A Marine color guard supports an annual Land of the Free Foundation dinner. In an area that in recent years has lacked a substantial military presence, Roski, Valley and Semcken take pride in giving their friends and colleagues in Los Angeles an opportunity to spend time with the military community.**

## Boxing: Marines of II MEF Roll With the Punches

Marines are training to peak physical levels in order to be eligible to compete in matches against other athletes in the boxing ring.

The II Marine Expeditionary Force Martial Arts Center of Excellence (MACE) boxing program produced four fighters who participated in this year's USA Boxing National Championships in Shreveport, La., held March 25-April 3.

Joseph Higgins, the head coach of the II MEF MACE boxing program, said that over the course of its first year the program made great strides.

"We were able to recruit Marines with previous boxing experience, which has made a very cohesive, competent, professional boxing team," Higgins said during an April interview. "It's been around seven months since the start of the program, and we are at the point we'd expected to be."

Higgins added that just like all sports,

every single boxing competition comes with the opportunity for critique.

"Sometimes you can win a fight and learn from mistakes in that fight," he said. "It's not always about winning or losing, it's about what can we do better moving forward. We review film and see what adjustments need to be made. Amateur boxing is only three rounds so you have to get the work done pretty fast."

Lance Corporal Seth McCann, an ammunition technician with 2nd Supply Battalion, was one of the four Marines from the team to compete in the national championship.

"Being able to compete on stage was surreal; I've fought in matches before, but not on that level," McCann said. "Going up against the best of the best, I was grateful for the opportunity. I trusted my coaches, trusted their training and I was able to show the effort I've been putting in all these months."

McCann said he was grateful for the

opportunity to participate in the nationals and gain professional recognition for the II MEF MACE team.

"At nationals I had a win my first night, but I lost against a fighter who was ranked fifth in the nation. That loss was what taught me the most and has made me even more excited for this upcoming match," McCann said, referencing an April tournament in Wilmington, N.C., in which the team competed again. "With the way I've been sparring, I hope to bring another win for our team, and since the nationals, I'm going in with more confidence," he added.

McCann said that being in the program requires a fighter to have balance in their rigorous training regimen.

"Everyone has been getting faster, stronger and inching our way to that peak level of performance," McCann said. "You start to learn more about your body, nutrition and levels of athletics."

With high expectations, Higgins said

**Marine boxers with the II MEF MACE take part in a training session at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., April 20. Four of the program's boxers participated in the USA Boxing National Championship this year.**



SGT JESUS SEPULVEDA TORRES, USMC

that joining the program is a lifestyles change and Marines will have to adjust their normal lifestyles to meet the demands of the program.

“The work is hard,” Higgins said. “This is their job—they get up early, they work out three times a day, do various runs every day, and come in the middle of the day for a boxing workout with two groups and different times. Their rest and nutrition are unbelievably important, or else they wouldn’t be able to keep up this level of training.”

Higgins said he has heard only positive feedback from the Marines on the team.

“From when they joined to now, they can’t believe the difference in themselves and have a better understanding of what we were talking about early on,” he said. “The fighters appreciate the patience we have and our objective is to build greatness here. Our goal is to get on that national level and hopefully have our Marine boxers at the Olympics one day.”

Sgt Jesus Sepulveda Torres, USMC

### Marines Test, Demo XFAB Prior to 2022 Fielding

The Marine Corps Tactical Systems Support Activity (MCTSSA) hosted a team of design experts who tested the network connectivity of the portable expeditionary fabrication lab (XFAB) at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., April 5-9.

The XFAB is a self-contained, transportable additive manufacturing (3D printing) lab that can deploy with battalion-level Marine maintenance units. The 20-by-20-foot shelter is collapsible for easier transport and houses five 3D printers, a laser scanner, a laser cutter and



AMY FORSYTHE

**A Marine holds a 3D-printed universal load stud wrench at MCTSSA Camp Pendleton, Calif., April 27. Earlier in the month, a team tested and evaluated the XFAB, a portable additive manufacturing lab that once fielded to the fleet will give Marines the ability to fabricate replacement and repair parts in an expeditionary environment.**

a computer design software system that enables Marines to fabricate replacement and repair parts in an expeditionary environment.

“MCTSSA offers a great opportunity to exercise the XFAB on the [Marine Corps Enterprise Network] and capture the messaging traffic and data packing messages in real time,” said Robert Davies, project officer for fabrication equipment under the program manager for supply and maintenance systems at Marine Corps Systems Command. “The test directors and support staff at MCTSSA were a pleasure to work with.”

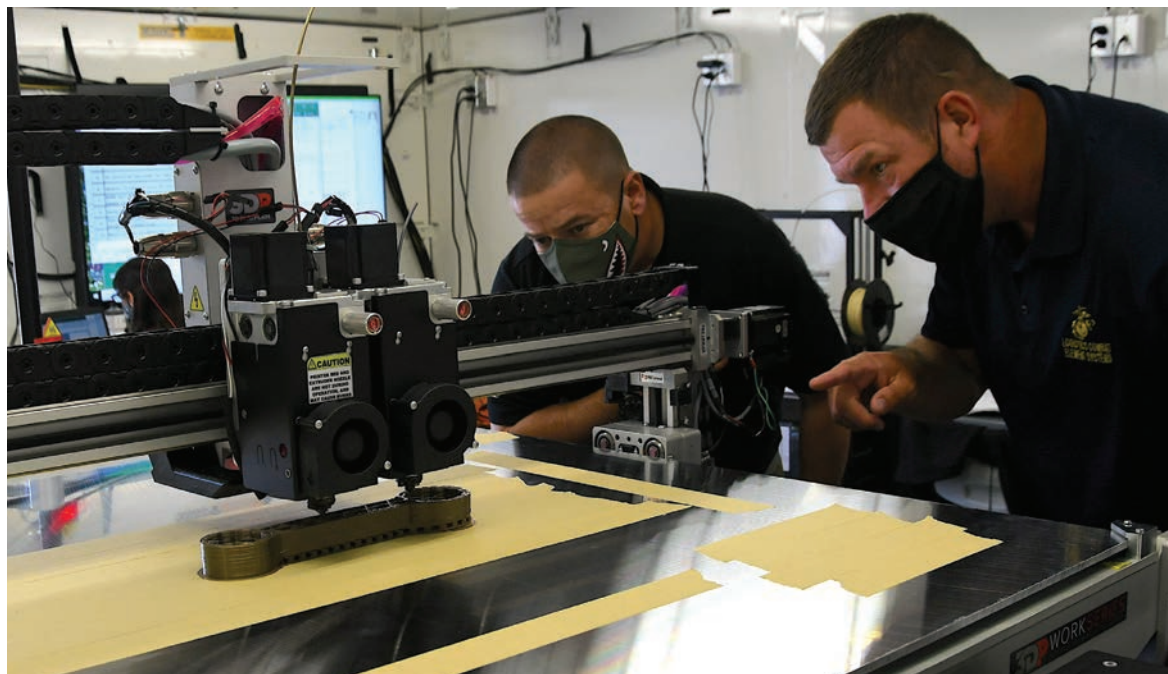
The goal of the testing event was to evaluate the connectivity of the Marine

Corps’ closed computer network to determine if any adjustments are needed before reaching final operational capability and delivering labs to the Fleet Marine Force in June 2022.

XFAB has been in development stages for approximately five years. It is designed to provide Marines a way to innovate by creating their own manufacturing tools, parts and signage. This unique capability can be employed in forward-deployed locations when specialty and hard-to-find parts are not readily available.

“MCTSSA is a great place for this kind of testing and demonstration,” said Lieutenant Colonel Michael Liguori, the commanding officer of MCTSSA. “Our

**Design experts inspect a 3D-printed all-purpose wrench during the XFAB testing event at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., April 7.**



AMY FORSYTHE



LCPL KRISTEN HOUK, USMC

**WAY OF THE FUTURE—Marines, civilians and visitors at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., should be on the lookout for Olli, a 3D-printed autonomous electric bus that is 5G-connected and is used to deliver goods around the installation. Pictured here, Cpl Ana Lopez, a distribution management specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, steps off Olli while delivering packages, March 31. The shuttle bus is currently part of a pilot program on the air station.**

location makes it easy for fleet units to visit and see the layout of the equipment firsthand. We're proud to support the supply and maintenance systems program manager and their team as they move closer to fielding this new capability to the operational forces."

Each lab comes equipped with numerous printers, a laser cutter and a laser scanner. The XFAB also comes standard with three laptops, two workstations and one 55-inch LED television screen.

When integrated into a Marine Expeditionary Force, the XFAB will reduce the maintenance battalion's logistics footprint by eliminating the need to transport large amounts of spare parts.

"As this technology and overall asset is brand new to the FMF, the maintenance community is extremely excited to receive their assets and begin use of the 3D scanning and printing capabilities," said Davies. "While some FMF units have 3D printers, those assets were procured with unit funds."

The XFAB capability is a Marine Corps Systems Command program of record and will be a supported asset in

the fleet, which will make integration for deployments much easier, Davies said.

During the testing event at MCTSSA in early April, senior leaders and Marines from 1st Marine Logistics Group, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Regiment, 3rd Amphibious Assault Battalion and 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing got a firsthand look at the equipment and how they can manufacture parts and products.

The XFAB container runs on generator or shore power and takes a team of four Marines two to three hours to set up and tear down. It weighs 10,500 pounds fully equipped and can be transported via the Logistics Vehicle System Replacement or a commercial flatbed truck.

By design, the XFAB and its components are to be operated by a Marine machinist as their primary duties include support of unit maintenance to include fabrication, repair or modification of equipment. However, the XFAB is composed of several workstations that would require just one Marine to be present to operate the equipment and tools.

Several items can be printed and manufactured including the detonation cord

connector, SABER handgrip removal tool, radio handset covers, M320 hammer strut tool, reinforced high-mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle door handles and a universal load stud wrench for use with all generators.

"Due to the solid MCEN [Marine Corps Enterprise Network] design from our supporting establishments, Naval Surface Warfare Center Crane and Carderock, we have had no redesign efforts required and have passed all testing while at MCTSSA with no outstanding issues to resolve," Davies added.

A future design is under development with a more tactical version of XFAB called "Tactical Fabrication," and will soon approach its fielding decision. According to Davies, this system will be slightly limited in capability but will be modular, stored in pelican cases, and is specific to a particular military occupational specialty.

The current requirement is to deliver 21 XFAB units. II MEF is scheduled to receive the first one sometime in mid-2022.

Amy Forsythe



## Act of Heroism: Marine Awarded For Saving Child from Rip Current

A Camp Lejeune-based Marine was recognized earlier this year for his bravery and heroism on May 4, 2019, when he saved the life of a child at nearby Surf City Beach, N.C.

Sergeant Danny P. McDonald, a scout sniper with 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, was a corporal at the time and was enjoying the early summer weather when he heard a frantic cry for help coming from the water. A 10-year-old boy was struggling to stay afloat as he was caught in a fierce rip current that carried him away from shore. After noticing the struggling child, McDonald quickly reacted to the situation and swam to the boy caught in the strong rip current that was carrying them both farther out to sea.

"I dove into the water before I even knew what I was doing," McDonald said. "I reacted on instinct."

Upon reaching the boy, McDonald was able to gain control, and following a quick assessment of the boy's condition, he realized that the boy was also suffering from a seizure. He placed the boy across his chest and began swimming and fighting against the strong current back to shore. After swimming for what seemed like hours, physically exhausted and struggling to stay afloat, McDonald reached the shore and pulled the boy out of the ocean. Another beachgoer, who happened to a Navy corpsman, witnessed McDonald rescue the boy and helped provide emergency medical aid. McDonald told a group of nearby Marines to call 911 while the corpsman continued to provide aid. Eyewitnesses stated that the boy would likely have drowned had McDonald not taken action.

"I didn't put that much thought into it. I knew I needed to get to him and make sure he was OK," McDonald said. "I just treated it like any other day."

For the lifesaving actions that occurred, McDonald was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal on March 17.

"It's very humbling and I'm super honored to receive this award," said McDonald.

Leaders in McDonald's unit said that the quick and decisive actions that he took showed not only what it means to be a Marine, but also a hero. They said that his actions should motivate other Marines to emulate his character and be used as an example as a model Marine.

"Sgt McDonald is a poster Marine," said Captain Walter Graves, the company commander for Weapons Company, 2/6. "His actions exemplify what it means to be a Marine. The initiative and fearlessness is exactly what we want all Marines to



CPL ELIJAH ABERNATHY, USMC

**From the left, SgtMaj Daniel Krause, Sgt Danny McDonald and SgtMaj Anthony Loftus gather together after a ceremony at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., March 17, during which McDonald was presented with the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for risking his own life to save a child from drowning in 2019.**

do and Sgt McDonald is that Marine."

Major General Francis L. Donovan, the commanding general of 2nd Marine Division, said to the family of the boy and to those who witnessed his selfless acts of heroism: "McDonald is a true hero.

McDonald undoubtedly deserves the award. I couldn't have asked for a better example of what it means to be a Marine."

Cpl Elijah Abernathy, USMC



## Crazy Caption Contest Winner



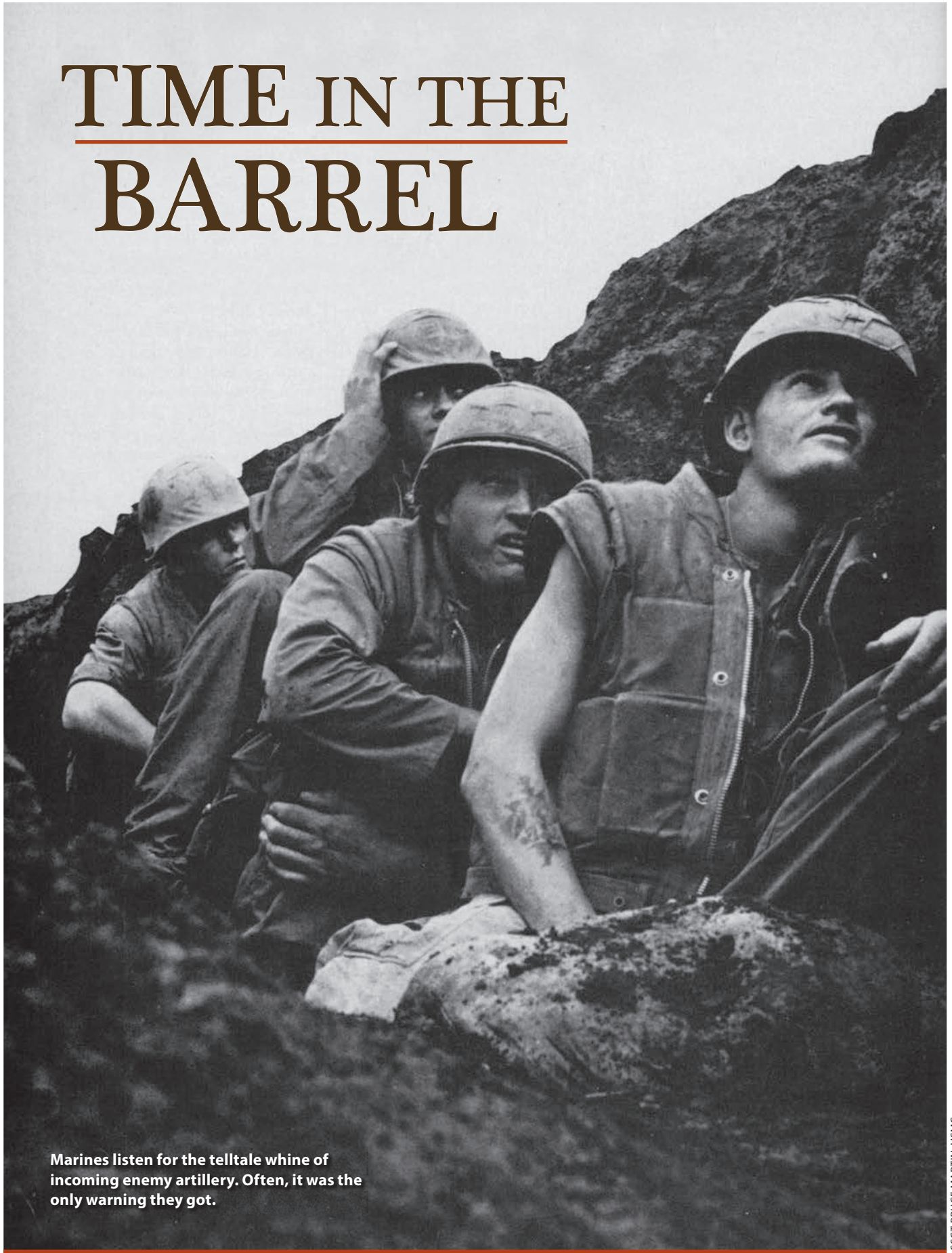
SGT HAILEY D. CLAY, USMC

"Headquarters! All secure!  
By the way, I'd like to extend my shift for another 12 hours."

Submitted by:  
Hugh Pratt  
Bath, Mich.

*Leatherneck* will no longer be publishing Crazy Captions entries. The winning entry from the June issue is published above and will pay \$25 or provide a one-year MCA membership to the winner.

# TIME IN THE BARREL



Marines listen for the telltale whine of incoming enemy artillery. Often, it was the only warning they got.

SSGT BRUCE MARTIN, USMC

## Marines holding Con Thien are pounded by artillery, harassed daily by enemy mortar fire and scourged by the elements. Facing them are 30,000 crack North Vietnamese soldiers “... eager to kick the staves from the barrel.”

By SSgt Bruce Martin, USMC

An approximate translation of its name from the Vietnamese means “place of angels.” On a map, you can find it by first locating the Ben Hai River where it flows to the South China Sea, then move about 12 “clicks” (miles) inland until you locate the tallest hillock between the Ben Hai and Cam Lo Rivers. If the scale of the map is big enough, its name, “Con Thien,” will be beside the 518-foot height. That’s where the men of the 3rd Marine Division go for a little of what they wryly call “time in the barrel.”

At intervals of about 30 days a fresh Marine battalion moves on to Con Thien for “time in the barrel,” a phrase used by Marine infantrymen in Korea who fought in holding actions just before the cease-fire there. Lieutenant Colonel Gorton Cook, the commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, 9th Marines, revived the phrase at a press conference shortly after his unit had been relieved by LtCol John Mitchell’s 1st Battalion, 9th Marines.

“Time in the barrel” can mean many things. To Marines on Con Thien, it means being in a position which permits the North Vietnamese forces to hammer away almost at their convenience; it’s comparable to the time-worn cliché “like shooting fish in the barrel.” Only, what’s in the “barrel” in and around Con Thien shoots back with devastating effect.

From Con Thien to where North Vietnam stretches out of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) is a scant 5 1/2 miles.

The terrain from Con Thien north to the Ben Hai River, which undulates back and forth across the 17th parallel dividing the two Vietnams, has been partially laced by man with thick rows of concertina barbed wire, mine fields and other barriers; nature has obstructed the area with thickly wooded tree lines, rolling terrain and lowlands that turn to marshes during rains.

To the immediate front of Con Thien—the north—where the bulk of the enemy is situated, runs “the strip.” It looks like the world’s largest golf course fairway. It is a 600-yard-wide swath, hacked and bulldozed naked of the thick underbrush and high elephant grass that once grew

in it for a distance of 11 miles along the DMZ. Now only a lush green carpet, brighter green because of the monsoon with barbed wire obstacles channeling would-be attackers into scores of mine fields, prevents the strip from being completely void.

Con Thien, physically, is not merely one hill, but three separately distinct promontories. Clustered very close to each other, they are divided by small dips and saddles. The only thing Con Thien’s red clay produces is an abundant “crop” of ants in sizes from large to giant.

Facing Con Thien from the north and surrounding it are a conservatively estimated 30,000 to 35,000 first-line North Vietnamese regulars and main-force Viet

Cong. Holding them at bay are 1,600 determined Marines.

If there were only one reason for the Marines to hold Con Thien, it would have to be because it overlooks the main overland invasion route from the north to the south and vice versa. A secondary reason could possibly be that the “strip” to the front, or north, of Con Thien may be one of the points where the U.S. intends to install the “electronic wall” announced by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara.

Blunt evidence that the North Vietnamese want possession of Con Thien, or at least want the allies to abandon it, is widespread. From across the DMZ they have brought artillery pieces to bear on



Laden with equipment, riflemen trudge through mud churned into mire by tracked vehicles helping to defend the triangle of hills.



USMC

Marines from 2/12 fire their 105 mm howitzer at Con Thien, Oct. 19, 1967.

the hill—an estimated 100 guns, at first, ranging in size from 122 mm to 130 mm and possibly 152 mm. It was in February 1967 that the North Vietnamese began shelling Con Thien with their artillery.

It was the first known occasion when they had brought artillery to bear on allied positions to the south. At that time, Con Thien was occupied by a small Vietnamese unit working with U.S. Army Special Forces personnel out of the ruins of a former French-constructed fort. In mid-May, the hill was turned over to the Marines, and, almost immediately, operations that carried them to the southern banks of the Ben Hai were launched against the enemy.

After the Marines moved to Con Thien, the shelling seemed to be more of a harassing tactic. Then, in September, when LtCol Cook's unit took over the position, the harassment became a fierce bombardment.

"They were trying to destroy our defenses, bunkers and guns," said LtCol

Cook. "They weren't just trying to harass us anymore. They could have done that with a few shells."

Almost daily in September, Con Thien's defenders received at least 500 rounds of enemy artillery fire. More than 1,000 rounds rained down on them on one day alone, but the Marines fought back with an aggressive defense.

Marine flyers, working with Air Force and Navy pilots, attacked enemy positions in the north which had been revealed by aerial photographs. Air Force B-52 Stratofortresses, each capable of carrying 60,000 pounds of bombs, sowed destruction on the jungle-hidden enemy emplacements. And Marine and Army artillery, along with U.S. and Australian naval gunfire, poured thousands of rounds into the North Vietnamese emplacements.

While Con Thien's Marines were rolling with the Communists' "Sunday punch," the enemy was flattened by the "1-2-3" knockout thrown from the air, ground and sea.

There's no way of knowing exactly how many enemy guns were destroyed by what General William C. Westmoreland, Commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam, called one of the heaviest concentrated bombardments in the history of warfare. But the destruction must have been overwhelming because fewer and fewer rounds from artillery pieces fell on Con Thien each day.

"We felt that we have taken the most they could throw at us," said Lieutenant General Robert Cushman Jr., Commanding General, III Marine Amphibious Force. "But we're going to continue to hold Con Thien and keep the pressure on the enemy at the same time."

Marine pilots, flying support around Con Thien, can be over that area within 15 minutes after they are scrambled into the air. This is not only during daylight hours and in good weather, but at night, in bad weather.

"In September," reported Major John Warrender, a United Airlines pilot who took leave from his civilian job to become an active-duty Marine reservist in Vietnam, "my squadron alone flew more than 500 sorties in the DMZ area around Con Thien."

Maj Warrender, operations officer for Marine Attack Squadron (VMA)-311, pointed out that his unit's A-4E Skyhawk jets hit dug-in gun emplacements; cut paved roads; attacked truck parks and supply areas; interdicted moving supply convoys; and destroyed a truck-towed SAM. All of this was done from within an area no farther than 30 miles north of the DMZ.

Not all of the missions flown by Marines around Con Thien in support of their infantry counterparts have been across the DMZ. On some occasions, Marine pilots have hit the enemy within 50 meters of friendly troops engaged in combat. Others have been so swift and surprising that even the Marines on the ground weren't too sure of what was happening at the time.

While *Leatherneck* was "in the barrel," incoming rounds from a nearby enemy 82 mm mortar triggered Marine 81 mm mortar men into action to return fire within seconds after the first enemy round had exploded. The Marine gunner of one mortar was preparing to raise the first outbound round to the tube of his weapon when there was a rushing scream overhead, a thundering explosion near the Marine lines and a Marine A-6 Intruder virtually stood on its tail as it boomed upward into the overcast sky.

An 81 mm mortar crew replenish their ammunition supply during a lull in the almost constant enemy artillery and mortar bombardment from within the DMZ.



SSGT BRUCE MARTIN, USMC

What had happened was that an Army forward air controller (FAC) on station over Con Thien and “the strip” in a Cessna Bird Dog observation spotter craft had seen the NVA crawl to within 600 meters of the Marines’ defensive perimeter, set up their gun and fire a half-dozen rounds. The Army FAC called down the Marine jet from its lofty on-station orbit, concealed well above the clouds, to attack the NVA with Zuni rockets.

The FAC reported six enemy bodies lying on the ground alongside their destroyed mortar. The Marine mortar crews never fired their counter-battery mission against the enemy.

SAM missiles in and above the DMZ have claimed two Marine aircraft supporting Con Thien. An abundance of anti-aircraft (AA) fire is also directed at pilots flying north over the DMZ. The U.S. warplanes attack these positions with frequency to assure themselves a better chance of completing their mission of supporting Con Thien.

If the enemy fire becomes too heavy, the Marines merely fly above it and attack the enemy positions with their all-weather guided bombing systems. This is the system that provides the Marines with

the capability of attacking the enemy in the worst weather, 24 hours a day.

“The monsoons won’t noticeably slow us down,” pointed out Maj Warrender. And then he reflected, “It must be quite a surprise for the enemy to find Marine planes bearing in on him out of the rain.”

U.S. Navy and Australian warships,

**Almost daily in September, Con Thien’s defenders received at least 500 rounds of enemy artillery fire. More than 1,000 rounds rained down on them on one day alone, but the Marines fought back with an aggressive defense.**

lying off the coast of North Vietnam, have fired thousands of 5-inch and 8-inch projectiles into NVA positions. One U.S. ship moved in so close to the Communist country’s shoreline to provide its ships’ batteries with maximum range that it was hit by an enemy recoilless rifle round.

On Con Thien, the saying goes that “... one will get them 10” meaning that

for every incoming round of Communist artillery fire, the enemy can expect to receive at least 10 in return from Marine and U.S. Army artillerymen based at Gio Linh, Cam Lo and Camp Carroll. Army 175 mm howitzers firing beside Marine 8-inch guns and 155 mm and 105 mm howitzers reach well across the DMZ to hit the enemy. Additionally, these same guns have ringed Con Thien with a withering belt of fire to protect it from mass attack by ground forces.

In addition to the Marine infantry on Con Thien, there are 4.2-inch mortars, pack howitzers and 105 mm howitzers on the hill’s southern slopes. Along with the recoilless rifles on ground mounts and Ontos and 90 mm tank guns, 81 mm mortars, 60 mm mortars, 40 mm AA guns and quad-mount

.50-caliber machine guns, these weapons are concerned mainly with suppressing enemy mortar and recoilless rifle fire emanating from around the position. Anything moving in the “strip,” which is a free-fire area, and anything seen moving in it “... gets hell shot out of it,” emphasized Sergeant David Roberson, a lanky 105 mm howitzer section leader.

The ground around Con Thien has

**A fire team works quickly to improve its perimeter bunker to withstand the heavy enemy barrages, possible ground assaults and the ravaging monsoon.**

been the stage for the fiercest fighting for Marines in the Vietnam conflict.

In mid-May, Marines were landed on the banks of the Ben Hai River by helicopter where they fought and defeated at least six enemy battalions during Operation Hickory. Since then, 14 Marine operations have been launched in and around the DMZ near Con Thien, and each has been successful from the standpoint that the enemy has never championed even the smallest victory. These operations have helped relieve a lot of the pressure applied by the enemy on Con Thien's defenders.

Yet, the big question often put to Marine commanders on Con Thien is "Can the position be overrun?" The answer is "probably" especially if the North Vietnamese are willing to pay the most exorbitant price in the history of warfare for such a small piece of real estate. If the enemy did overrun Con Thien, he couldn't hold it more than a few hours for he would soon find himself in the most untenable position, from his standpoint, that he could ever face.

Besides, capture of Con Thien by the NVA would amount to nothing more than a small propaganda victory, and they could hardly afford to pay the price.

There are several more Marine infantry battalions ready to rush in to Con Thien to fend off an all-out enemy attack, along with a number of South Vietnamese airborne and Ranger battalions.

Although the enemy shelling has slackened appreciably, there is little rest for the Marines on Con Thien, day or night. When the harassing shelling ceases, Communist foot soldiers take over. They hug the wire surrounding Con Thien during the day and begin their probing techniques at dusk.

"They used a tactic that worked pretty good for a while," explained LtCol Cook, "until we countered it with a better tactic."

The enemy would open fire with heavy automatic weapons on a Marine position or at random on the Marine lines. As the Marines began to return fire on the suspected enemy firing point, the NVA would then open fire from a new position a few hundred yards either to the left or right of their initial "probe-by-fire" effort. This caught the Marines off guard a few times before they learned what to expect from an enemy who is reputed to be "unpredictable."

The diversion-by-fire, hit-them-when-



they're-shooting-the-other-way technique of the enemy came to an abrupt halt when Marines cautiously ignored the opening rounds of enemy fire and delivered fierce fire to each flank of the enemy position which initially opened fire. In their tactic,

**Marines spend every waking minute of the daylight hours improving and expanding their bunkers and strengthening them to withstand the punishment not only from the enemy barrages, but from the ravaging elements, as well.**

the enemy might have been trying to make the Marines think they were being attacked by a large ground force and were about to be overrun.

"Mad minutes" is a tactic the Marines practice, particularly at night, to stymie would-be infiltrators. One sector of "the strip" is selected as the recipient of melting fire from Marine positions. Into this area,

a score or more of flat-trajectory firing weapons are often brought to bear for a few minutes. Recoilless rifles, tank guns, heavy machine guns and 40 mm AA guns tear at whatever or whoever is in their line of fire. The enemy never knows where or when he's going to have to face "mad minutes" and he's become obviously less effective in his probing efforts.

On Con Thien, one never quite adapts to living under the conditions imposed by the uncertainties of war and the seemingly ruthless assaults of nature. Marines learn to exist, survive and to "hold this damn hill and keep 'Mr. Charles' (a new term being applied to North Vietnamese forces who are considered to be more sophisticated than Viet Cong, the "Victor Charlies") from foreclosing on something that doesn't belong to him anyway" said Master Sergeant Ramon Guillen.

There are no buildings or tents dotting Con Thien's skyline. Where the ramshackle French fort once stood are sandbagged bunkers built over sturdy frames of timber, some reinforced with steel.

"These are better than the barracks we live in back in the States," said Private



SSGT BRUCE MARTIN, USMC

152 mm gun on his bunker. “Even if you build a better bunker, the bigger guns can knock it out. But it takes some damn good shooting to put a direct hit on a bunker.”

There are casualties on Con Thien almost daily but that’s one of the hard facts of holding a position that the enemy wants desperately to be vacated.

“Most of the wounds the Marines sustain on Con Thien are arm and leg wounds,” explained Navy Lieutenant Donald Shortridge, a medical doctor assigned to the 3rd Battalion. “It’s the flak vest the men religiously wear that keep down the possible high number of more serious, and even fatal, wounds.”

Dr. Shortridge and his corpsmen worked in what must have been the sturdiest bunker on Con Thien. It was their “hospital” and in it, they treated the wounded and sheltered them until medical evacuation choppers removed them to hospitals in the rear or hospital ships lying off the South Vietnam coast. Outside the

**Below: A Marine platoon from 1st Bn, 4th Marines builds a bunker emplacement at Con Thien with sandbags for overhead cover in January 1968.**



USMC

First Class Dominic Ricci. “Why, we’ve got four men to a room—if you can call a bunker a room.”

Marines spend every waking minute of the daylight hours improving and expanding their bunkers and strengthening them to withstand the punishment not only from the enemy barrages, but from the ravaging elements, as well.

“There’s just no such thing as a shell-proof bunker,” said Gunnery Sergeant Ralph Stokes, an artilleryman who survived a direct hit from a Russian-made

bunker, an amphibious tractor stood ready to accept any overflow of patients from the “hospital” bunker.

“To find a Marine here without his Stetson (helmet) and plank-jacket (a synonym for the durolon-plate-lined flak jacket) is like finding a 95-pound weakling on Muscle Beach,” said an officer from California. “The jacket becomes about as uncomfortable as another layer of skin, and after a few days, the helmet feels about as heavy as a golf cap.”

“Decorating” the helmets and flak

jackets is a source of amusement to Con Thien’s defenders.

One Marine rifleman, 18-year-old Private Luis Santiago, has painted the slogan, “This is the only ‘pot’ I dig!” on his 3-pound headgear, an obvious spoof at “pot” (marijuana) users in the States. Other helmets and jackets on Con Thien proclaim the number of days the wearer has left on Con Thien; some tell the wearer’s blood type; others have home towns and the names of sweethearts lettered on them; and one endorses “The Breakfast of Champions: Ham and Lima Beans,” a dig at the steady C-ration diet imposed on Con Thien’s defenders because of “circumstances.”

**O**n Con Thien, no one suffers from malnutrition or thirst although there isn’t an abundance of C-rations or water since most of the supplies must be flown in by helicopter. Along with these staples sometimes come fresh fruit and milk to relieve the monotony.

Mess halls and showers are not to be found on Con Thien. No one wants to get caught soaped-down or queued up in a chow line when “incoming” starts.

When it rains, the Marines “shower” beneath ponchos stretched to channel the water over them, or if adequate water is flown in, they bathe their faces, hands and feet and try to shave at least every three days. And the heads (outdoor toilets) are well sandbagged just in case a Marine happens to be caught in one when the enemy opens fire.

“You never get clean here,” Lance Corporal Don Demont grinned as he scraped three layers of mud from his boots with a bayonet. “And the mud that clings to your clothes just makes them rot off your body, but our resupply brings in all the new clothing we ask for especially socks!”

In summer, it was the dust from Con Thien’s red clay that clogged the nostrils of Marines and clung to their sweat-soaked bodies and clothing, turning them dull red. And there was the heat, unbearable at times, especially in the bunkers. The monsoons unleashing themselves on the bastion brought only cooler weather. The dust turned to mud which, churned into an almost liquid consistency by the tanks, Ontos and amtracs defending the hill, became a waist-deep mire.

“The mud’s a little in our favor,” pointed out PFC Donnie Simms, a wireman. “It swallows up some of the incoming stuff and the rounds just go ‘whomp’ instead of ‘crump’ and we get a lot less shrapnel.”

It’s a consolation to Con Thien’s de-

fenders that whatever misery or “blessing in disguise” (like the mud) nature inflicts on them, she is equally impartial to the enemy. They get wet, hot, cold and filthy too.

“The best thing about Con Thien,” said LCpl Jerry Breault, a rifleman fighting through his second tour on the hill, “is that you’re not going to be here forever!”

“What’s the worst thing about Con Thien?” repeated Staff Sergeant Robert Gilroy. “Ha! Take a look around, and you tell me!”

Certain to rank at the top of the list are the incoming rounds but everything else receives almost equal billing: dust, heat, rain, mud, rats, insects and the unnerving quiet when the guns on either side are momentarily silent.

“Being here’s a thrill-a-minute,” Hospital Corpsman Third Class Jerry Wilkins whimsically lamented. “You never know what’s going to happen next and it would be kind of superfluous to say that we keep on our toes.”

It’s not unusual to see a Marine or corpsman stop what he’s doing, raise an ear to the wind and listen intently for the telltale whine of an incoming artillery round or the distant “plump” of an enemy mortar. And if the rounds start falling on one end of Con Thien’s bunkered complex, Marines at the far side scurry into their dugouts too. There’s no warning system on Con Thien, other than the too familiar shout of “Incoming!” There’s no all-

clear signal either. Marines venture from their positions when they can no longer hear the explosions of incoming fire.

**L**ife in the bunkers grows monotonous at times. Often flooded by rains, the bunkers pose a drainage problem. Since water is prone to adhere to the laws of gravity and flow downhill, often the only solution for emptying water from a bunker is a bailing bucket. Yet, some of the dugouts have so many drainage ditches around them they resemble carelessly irrigated fields. Others look as though a moat has been purposefully dug to deny entrance to unwanted intruders.

Inside the bunkers, the air is tepid and hot in the summer and tepid and damp in the winter. These discomforts are scarcely noticed during enemy bombardments.

Lighting in the emplacements—often

called “hootches”—runs the gamut from brilliant battery-powered lights, bought in PXs or sent from home, to C-ration cans filled with kerosene with inverted cans over them slit for a piece of web belt which has been pushed through to serve as a wick. There are also storm lanterns, candles and flashlights. Batteries for the flashlights are always in high demand, but it’s rare for a Marine not to be able to draw a couple from his unit supply



**A lone rifleman mans a sandbagged bunker facing “the strip.” His job is to observe enemy movement from the north.**

man since there always seems to be an adequate supply on hand to help keep the troops out of the dark.

Supplying Con Thien with everything it needs from batteries to bulldozers (used to build up the emplacements) is a task that ceases only when weather, steady enemy fire or darkness curtail the sometimes harrowing efforts.

A road stretching from Cam Lo to Con Thien permits overland resupply if rainy weather has not turned it into a sea of mud. When that happens, there are always helicopters available to fly the necessities in to Con Thien.

Most of the resupply to Con Thien is now accomplished by air because of the monsoons. Marine pilots flying UH-34 and CH-53 “Super Birds” haul in everything from water trailers to tons of ammunition

and mail to sundry packs filled with cigarettes, candy, gum, insect repellent, chewing tobacco and toothbrushes.

Seldom do resupply choppers leave Con Thien with their cargo nets or cabins empty. Damaged equipment, expended shell casings and other unneeded items are shipped out via chopper.

Overall, airborne resupply is a dawn-to-dusk effort.

“If things get so bad that our choppers can’t land,” pointed out Cpl Carl Dollier, a shore party Marine who helps run a resupply helicopter landing zone on Con Thien, “we can always get it in the next day. But if it’s still too hairy the next day, our C-130 Hercules transports can parachute gear to us.”

Resupply for the enemy gunners is not so boldly or adequately handled as is that for the Marines. Everything for the NVA artillerymen must come in through surreptitious means, and therefore, slowly. Most of it never makes it from its point of origin to its intended destination because of U.S. air efforts.

“We can tell when they’ve been recently resupplied,” Private First Class Jerry Kantowski said, holding up a large, shiny shell fragment that had buried itself in his bunker. “First, we get a little more incoming than usual, and secondly, we can tell if it’s new because it’s shiny like this and has no discolorations from being stored in the weather a long time.”

Of the rounds that fall on Con Thien, a large percentage are duds. This poses a problem for Marines who have to move across the pocked terrain at night. Engineers eliminate this problem by blowing the duds where they fall.

“We just kind of waltz up to them—if they’re inside our positions—place a little TNT or C-3 explosive around them, run a det cord back a safe distance, and blow ’em,” LCpl Clifford Murray, an engineer, explained. “Of course, we give a healthy ‘fire in the hole’ warning down the line because we don’t want anybody to think it’s incoming when we blow.”

For recreation, the Marines look forward to mail call and B-52 raids on the enemy positions. Both bring the Marines from their positions with almost equal enthusiasm.

Some of the men who receive letters



from Stateside pen pals willingly share them with their less fortunate buddies. But letters from families, wives or girlfriends are read over and over until the next mail arrives.

“Mail gets about as high a priority around here as the beans, bullets and bandages that are hauled in,” said SSgt Ed Mical. “We once had a couple of large bags of mail take a direct hit at Dong Ha from an enemy mortar while they were waiting to be loaded aboard a chopper. That really teed the troops off! But it didn’t depress them—just got them fighting mad.”

The B-52 raids, called “arclights,” bring cheers from the Marines who stop whatever they’re doing to watch and wish the enemy the worst of luck. The shockwaves from the exploding bombs also bring shouts from the onlooking troops. And when a secondary explosion occurs among the impacting bombs, the cheers of appreciation from the Marines must reach well across the DMZ to the ears of the North Vietnamese.

“Sometimes it’s hours before the North Vietnamese can get their stuff together again for another barrage on us,” said Sgt Nathan Queen, who received the Bronze Star Medal for heroism the first time his battalion occupied Con Thien. “And then,

other times, the B-52s aren’t even out of sight before the garbage starts coming in again.”

The effectiveness of the high-level bombing may be questionable to some, but to the Marines on the hill who benefit most by it, there is no doubt in their collective minds that the super Stratofortresses are doing their bit in gradually knocking out the enemy’s guns and positions and destroying his supplies.

To the infantrymen on Con Thien, war

**The B-52 raids, called “arclights,” bring cheers from the Marines who stop whatever they’re doing to watch and wish the enemy the worst of luck.**

is a very personal thing—just as it is to all infantrymen fighting anywhere. And though the Marines are well outnumbered by Communist forces in the immediate vicinity, they personally feel that they can handle any threat of mass attack on the hill.

“They might get to us ... but I doubt it,” said machine gunner PFC Cecil Johnston as he coated his M-60 with oil against a

drizzling rain, “but they’ll be walking on top of their buddies if they do. I’ve got three spare gun barrels just for them!”

Johnston’s spirit typifies the high morale and courage that is the rule rather than the exception among the Marines on Con Thien. They are not depressed; they are not listless; and above all, they are determined that they will not give up the hill until they’re told to do so.

“Who knows,” said Marine history buff Cpl Roger Barrett, “I may walk into the club back in the States one day and somebody will shout ‘Stand, gentlemen! He served on Con Thien!’ “

Barrett was, of course, referring to the phrase, “Stand, gentlemen! He served on Samar!” an honor once accorded Marines who survived that now historic experience.

What the enemy has in store for Con Thien can’t be foreseen by the Marines, but they’re certain it isn’t going to be anything they’ll like. But what history has in store for Con Thien’s defenders is a place beside veterans of Guadalcanal, Wake Island and Chosin Reservoir. There can be no doubt that these “aggressive defenses” fought years ago are now being matched by the valor of the Marines who are holding Con Thien today. 🇺🇸



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# History of the 5th Marine Division



By Joe D. Thacker

*Editor's note: This is the fifth in a series of articles from the Leatherneck archives about the Corps' Divisions during World War II. Prepared by what was then known as the Historical Division of the Marine Corps, the article traces the 5th Marine Division's activities in the Pacific.*

It was during the closing months of 1943 that it became apparent that the Marine Corps needed a 5th Division for combat operations in the Pacific. The 1st was preparing for the New Britain operation; the 2nd was moving toward Tarawa; the 3rd was busy in the jungles of Bougainville; and the 4th was getting set for the Marshalls campaign. There was no reserve Division available.

On Armistice Day, 1943, the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, San Diego Area, and the Commanding General at Camp Lejeune, N.C., to organize "the 5th Marine Division consisting of the 22nd Marines (Infantry) [later replaced by 28th Marines], 26th Marines (Infantry), 27th Marines (Infantry), 13th Marines (Artillery), 16th Marines (Engineer), and Headquarters and Service Troops." The Division was officially activated on Jan. 21, 1944, with Brigadier General Thomas E. Bourke as Acting Division Commander.

The Division's training schedule in the



SGT LOU LOWERY, USMC

**Marines land on Green Beach and attempt to push off the iconic black sands of Iwo Jima in February 1945.**

summer of 1944 included landing exercises by each regimental combat team at San Clemente and Aliso Beach near Camp Pendleton. Between August and October, elements of the Division sailed for Hawaii and the command post of the Division rear echelon closed at Camp Pendleton.

On Oct. 18, 1944, the Division staff was informed that the Division, as part of the 5th Amphibious Corps, would participate in an assault on Iwo Jima, referred to as "Island X," and would be assigned to the 5th Amphibious Corps, with loading for the Iwo Jima operation to begin on Dec. 2.

Training in November emphasized planning and functioning of combat team and landing team staffs with special stress on the planning and preparation of operation orders.

After a delay, the loading of cargo aboard ship began on Christmas Day and

on Jan. 22, the 13th Marines, 11th Amphibious Tractor Battalion, 5th Tank Battalion, and the 5th Shore Party Regiment sailed from Pearl Harbor. On Jan. 27, the remainder of the 5th Division sailed for Eniwetok and Saipan. While underway, the word was passed that the 5th was bound for Iwo Jima, its first combat mission.

On Feb. 19, 1945, the Division, numbering 24,797 officers and enlisted men, began going ashore on the southeast beaches of Iwo Jima. The 4th Division landed on the right of the 5th, and the 3rd Division formed the expeditionary troops reserve. The Iwo Jima landing force—Task Group 56.1—was built around the 5th Amphibious Corps under the command of MajGen Harry Schmidt.

In the 5th Division zone of action, Combat Teams (CT) 27 and 28 landed abreast with CT 27 on the right. The



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

**After reaching the beachhead, a wave of Marines is organized to prepare for the push inland on Iwo Jima, Feb. 19, 1945.**

Division reserve consisted of Landing Teams (LT) 3/28 and 1/26. CT 26 (less LT 1/26) was in reserve.

The first wave hit the beaches between 8:59 a.m. and 9:03 a.m., and 2/28 landed facing Mount Suribachi in order to cover the open left flank. Beaches were lightly held by the enemy, but when the assault units moved inland Japanese artillery and mortar fire increased steadily.

Supporting units encountered considerable difficulty on the beach. The loose volcanic sand was bogging down the wheeled vehicles, the surf was causing a considerable number of landing craft to broach, and the steep terraces were impeding movement from the beaches. Enemy artillery and mortar fire blanketed the entire beach area and extensive mine fields were taking a heavy toll.

In spite of these difficulties, reserves and initial supplies continued to pour ashore. Tanks were coming in by 9:30 a.m.

At 12:15 p.m., 3/28 landed and 1/26 was soon released to CT 27 to fill in a gap between the right flank of CT 27 and the 4th Division. The remainder of CT 26 was ashore by 5:32 p.m. By the end of the day, all the main elements of the 5th Division were ashore. After cutting the island in

two, the 27th Marines moved northward while the 28th Marines attacked to the south against Mount Suribachi.

On Feb. 20, the 5th Division resumed its two-pronged attack, CT 28 toward the south against Mount Suribachi and CT 27 toward the north and Airfield No. 1. The attack against Mount Suribachi was met with heavy fire from pillboxes and emplacements at the base of the mountain

and from caves dug into the cliffs. By the end of the day, only minor gains had been made.

On the 5th Division's northern front, CT 27 was able to make some progress although enemy opposition was heavy. Enemy artillery and mortar fire continued to fall on the beaches, and casualties mounted. The beach line was littered with broached and wrecked landing craft,



LEATHERNECK FILE PHOTO

**Marines hug Iwo's black volcanic sand as mortar shells burst all around during the initial fighting on the tiny island.**



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Riflemen lead the way as flame throwing Marines of the 5th Division, crouched with the weight of their weapons, move up to work on a concentration of Japanese pillboxes.



SGT LOU LOWERY, USMC

The enemy had worked hard and efficiently in their defensive preparations on Iwo Jima. With pillboxes so strong that they could withstand direct hits from high explosive ordnance, well-trained Japanese soldiers were prepared to defend the 8 square miles of the island.



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

**At a forward observation post, Marine spotters located the exact fix on an enemy position and call to request a concentration of fire on the Japanese strong point.**

After securing the top of Suribachi, the 28th Marines was placed in Fifth Corps reserve until Feb. 28, mopping up and picking off Japanese who succeeded in digging themselves out of caves during darkness.

By Feb. 24, more than 600 dead Japanese had been counted on the rugged slopes of Suribachi and it was estimated that perhaps 1,000 additional enemy soldiers had been sealed in caves. Engineers sealed 180 caves and cave entrances in the Suribachi area, and infantry and demolition teams destroyed more than 200 Japanese installations. By Feb. 26, the Mount Suribachi area was considered secure.

In the northern sector CT 26, with LT 2/27 still attached, continued its efforts to drive ahead through the formidable obstacles of terrain and the heavy enemy fire. In an attempt to knock out the enemy positions, just beyond Airfield No. 1, that had been holding up the advance, a heavy preparation was laid down on Feb. 24 by artillery, naval gunfire, and planes, and the tanks of all three divisions were concentrated for a coordinated drive. Assisted by this spearhead, CT 21 in the 4th Division zone of action was able to move forward abreast of CT 26 by noon of Feb. 24. A second barrage was then laid down on the same targets by all

and the loose sand continued to pose a problem in the delivery of supplies ashore. Green Beach 1 was impassable except for LVTs. In spite of these difficulties, the shore and beach parties somehow delivered the goods.

**A**t 8:45 a.m. on Feb. 21, CT 28 continued its drive on Mount Suribachi and again progress was slow in the face of determined enemy resistance. Concealed Japanese positions were captured in hand-to-hand combat and with the assistance of flame throwers and demolition squads. By nightfall, CT 28 had reached the base of the mountain, where it dug in for the night.

Meanwhile, CT 27 was also encountering stiff enemy resistance in its drive northward. Casualties were heavy, especially in the area of LT 1/26. With the assistance of tanks, an advance of approximately 900 yards was made during the day.

At daylight on Feb. 22, CT 26 passed through the 27th Marines and launched an attack although Japanese fire on the right flank slowed the regiment's advance to just several hundred yards. They were again subjected to enfilade fire and forced to withdraw to its original position.

Meanwhile, CT 28, in the southern sector, was working its way around the base of Suribachi. The fighting was in the nature of a direct assault on Japanese fortifications by small units of riflemen. At the end of the day, Suribachi had been surrounded except for a 400-yard stretch on the west coast. It was decided to send a patrol up the northern face of Suribachi on the morning of Feb. 23. At 9 a.m., LT 2/28 was ordered to secure and occupy the top of the mountain.

A patrol from Company E, LT 2/28 was able to climb to the rim of the crater

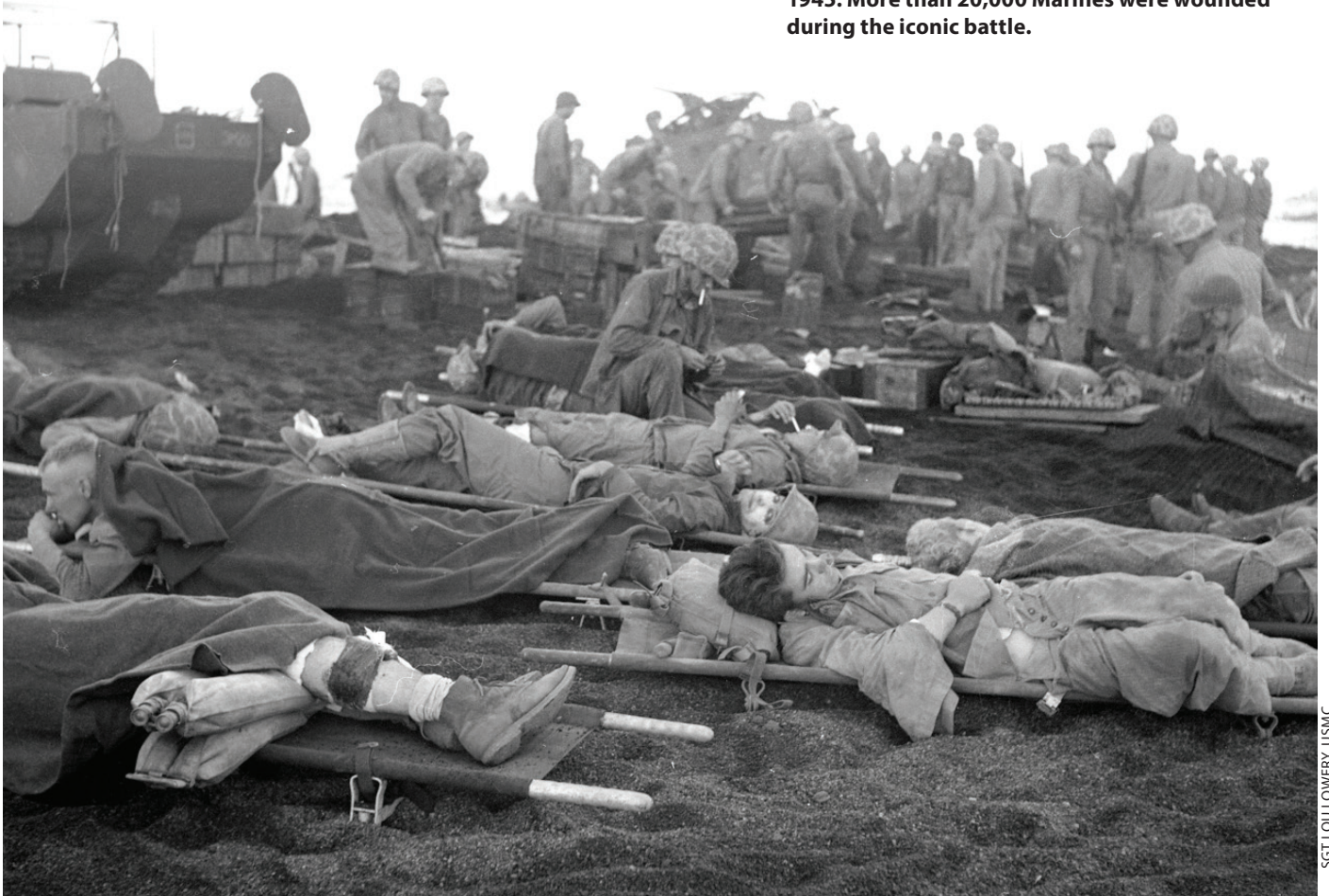
without the use of special scaling equipment. Our men, led by Platoon Sergeant Ernst I. Thomas Jr. (killed in action on March 3, 1945), reached the top of Suribachi and planted a small flag (54 inches by 28 inches) on the northeast rim of the crater at about 10:20 a.m. Sergeant Thomas's advance party was followed by the remainder of the 40-man patrol from Co E, led by First Lieutenant Harold G. Schrier, executive officer of the company.

A large flag (8 feet by 4 feet, 8 inches) was procured from LST 779, and later this flag, made famous by the photograph taken by Joe Rosenthal of the Associated Press, was flying above the smoke of battle.



**A patrol prepares to depart after receiving their orders in the early days of the battle of Iwo Jima, February 1945. (Photo by Sgt Lou Lowery, USMC)**

**Marines await medevac on Iwo Jima, February 1945. More than 20,000 Marines were wounded during the iconic battle.**



SGT LOU LOWERY, USMC

**Right: A badly wounded Marine receives vital blood plasma (foreground) as MajGen Keller Rockey watches corpsmen attend to some of the 5th Division wounded during the Battle of Iwo Jima. (Leatherneck file photo)**

available artillery, planes, rockets, and naval gunfire. Under cover of this heavy preparation, CT 26 advanced slowly forward, still under heavy fire from Japanese in the well-entrenched cave positions on the right flank.

When a barrage was laid down on one of the positions, the defenders merely retired to the depths of their emplacement and sat tight. When the bombardment ceased, the enemy troops remanned their weapons and when the Marines advanced, opened up with heavy fire. When one position was assaulted, the Japanese would move to another position on the flank where they would open up with a deadly surprise fire.

In spite of this stubborn resistance, CT 26 managed to make a gain of ap-



proximately 500 yards on Feb. 24. By this time, the massed fires laid down by the Marine Corps artillery were proving their value, and their accuracy had been greatly increased by observation posts that had been set up on newly won Mount Suribachi.

The next day, Feb. 25, was a quiet one for the 5th Division but on Feb. 26, after a heavy preparatory barrage, CT 26 (LT

2/27 attached) jumped off to resume the drive northward. Throughout the day heavy artillery and mortar fire was received from enemy positions on the high ground to the north. Counter-battery fire was successful in knocking out a number of the Japanese guns. By nightfall, CT 26 had advanced about 300 yards. By this time, the 5th Division's casualties had mounted to 3,518, while Japanese losses



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

**Officers of the 5th Division direct operations from a sandbagged position on Iwo Jima. From the left: BGen Leo D. Hermle, Assistant Division Commander; MajGen Keller E. Rockey (with phone), Division Commander; Col James F. Shaw, Operations Officer; and Col Ray Robinson, Division Chief of Staff.**

to the Division totaled 2,663 dead and five prisoners.

On Feb. 27, CT 27 (LT 1/26 attached) relieved CT 26 and, following an artillery preparation, resumed the attack. Conditions in the rear areas had improved and supplies were moving up steadily. Snipers were being mopped up by patrols, and the rebuilding of Airfield No. 1 was under way. The commanding officer of VMO-5 landed his OY-1 plane on the first airfield and began preparations for bringing in the remainder of the squadron.

**O**n Feb. 28, following a 45-minute preparation by artillery, naval gunfire, air attack and rockets, CT 27 launched an attack to secure an intermediate objective which included Hill 362. Progress was very slow due primarily to the necessity of reducing each cave and covered emplacement. CT 27 was up against the backbone of the enemy's cross-island defensive position. Hill 362, although only 362 feet high, was rugged and rocky and dotted with many caves. The hill provided excellent enemy observation of the entire western side of the island.

In addition to the enemy resistance from caves and pillboxes, 5th Division units were faced with flanking fire from

the right. The Japanese had apparently one or more gun positions on one of the two rocks, Kama and Kangoku, that lay about 600 yards off the west coast. Steady pressure and intense fire were maintained against Hill 362, but the enemy put up a bitter and determined defense, making no withdrawal, but leaving each man to be killed in his position or, if bypassed, to become a sniper in the rear of our lines. Time and again, elements of CT 27 managed to climb part way up the hill, only to be wiped out or driven off.

By 5 p.m. on Feb. 28, the crest of Hill 362 had been taken, but it was not entirely secure.

CT 28 (LT 3/26 attached) relieved CT 27 on March 1 and attacked with three battalions abreast. The attack moved slowly ahead and by 10:30, Landing Teams 1/28 and 2/28 had completely occupied Hill 362 and the ridge line running east and west, but were unable to negotiate the steep cliff on the north side because of heavy machine-gun and mortar fire. Artillery, mortar and rockets were concentrated in front of the hill, but with little effect. At the end of the day's operations, Hill 362 was secure but still under a heavy artillery and mortar fire.

The next major objective was Nishi

Ridge. At 8 a.m., March 2, CT 28, LT 3/27 and the 5th Tank Battalion jumped off in an attempt to take the ridge running east from Nishi. Landing Team 3/26 attacked in conjunction with CT 28. At about 2 p.m., LT 2/26 was ordered to move to the right flank to relieve 3rd Division elements in the 5th Division zone of action and tie in with the right flank of LT 3/26.

The scheme of maneuver was for LTs 1/28 and 2/28 to attack along the right and left sides of Hill 362 and join on the north side. Landing Team 3/28 was to continue up the west coast on the left of LT 2/28. Landing Team 2/28 sustained very heavy casualties while crossing the open field in front of Hill 362.

At 7:30 a.m., March 3, the 5th Division attacked with CTs 28 and 26 abreast, left to right. Positions were consolidated at 5 p.m., but all elements were engaged in close-quarter fighting. Landing Team 1/26 was engaged with an active enemy force throughout the night of March 3-4 in grenade exchanges and very close-quarter fighting. The attack was continued at 7:30 a.m., March 4.

March 5 was devoted to reorganizing and improving positions and mopping up rear areas, and the attack was resumed the next day. The Japanese poured heavy

rifle, machine-gun, and mortar fire and phosphorus shells into the advancing units. Jagged rock and open country made tank support impossible and reduced the effectiveness of artillery support.

On March 7, three regiments, the 28th, 26th, and 27th Marines, left to right, attacked abreast and CT 28 advanced rapidly against moderate small arms and machine-gun fire, capturing Hill 215, located about 850 yards north of Hill 362. CT 27 (less 3rd Battalion) made limited gains.

The attack was resumed just before 8 a.m., March 8, with the main effort on the right in the zone of CT 27. In a battle against terrain as well as the Japanese, CT 28 advanced approximately 300 yards. Enemy resistance from cave positions was strong and the rocky-edged reverse slopes were defended equally as well as the forward slopes. CT 26 estimated that in its advance to the north as many Japanese were bypassed as were killed.

Along the west coast, the all but impassable terrain, together with active enemy opposition, limited the advance of CT 28 on March 9. The attack by LT 2/27 against one of the strongest points of the island resulted in a furious battle at close range. Resistance on the Division's left

flank was light until the advancing units came under fire from the high ridge running generally southeast from Kitano Point. A deep gorge that ran across 700 yards of the front provided a further obstacle and armored bulldozers were used in an attempt to clear a road for movement of tanks into the front lines. Little advance was made on the rest of the Division's front.

**A**t 8:30 a.m., March 11, the 3rd and 4th Divisions, on the right of the 5th, attacked to seize the remainder of the island as the 5th attacked with CT 28 and CT 27 abreast.

CT 28 pushed its front lines to the rim of the rocky gorge to its front, while CT 27 (with LT 1/26 attached), continuing its methodical destruction of enemy caves, was able to make some advance on the right. Heavy casualties resulted from the intense and accurate enemy small-arms fire delivered at close range. Direct artillery and air support could not be used but artillerymen from the 13th Marines were used as infantry replacements. The attack met with bitter resistance all along the front as it resumed at 7 a.m. on March 12. Tanks spearheaded the attack of CT 27 (LT 2/26 attached), but progress was slow against the network of pillboxes, spider traps and caves.

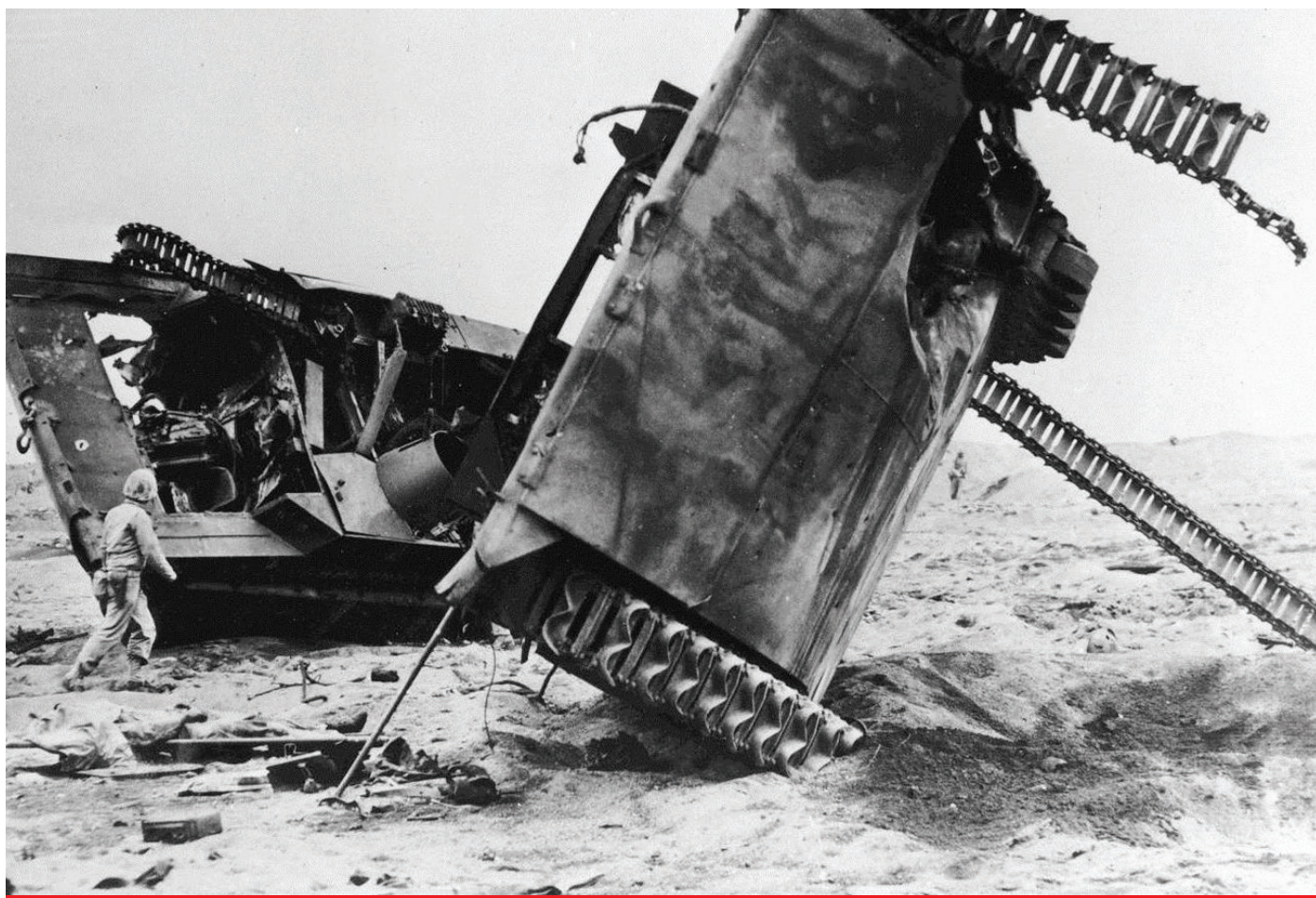
The 5th Division secured its attack at 6:30 a.m., March 14, with three regiments abreast. The two days of softening up of the enemy's final position had had its effect and an advance had been registered in the center and on the right by CT 26 and CT 27. The key to the enemy defensive position continued to be the rocky gorge and the strong point in the line on the 5th Division's right flank.

At 10:30 a.m. a bombing run was made against targets on the cliff positions just south of Kitano point and tank-dozers and armored bulldozers were used to prepare tank routes over the almost impassable terrain. By the end of the day, CT 27 had advanced 600 yards.

The attack was continued the next day against enemy resistance centered around the strong point on the 5th Division's right flank. This position, plus the rocky gorge facing CT 28, blunted efforts to bypass or encircle by advancing the 5th's right flank.

At 8:15 a.m., March 16, the 3rd Division attacked on the 5th Division's right reaching the north coast at 1:50 p.m.

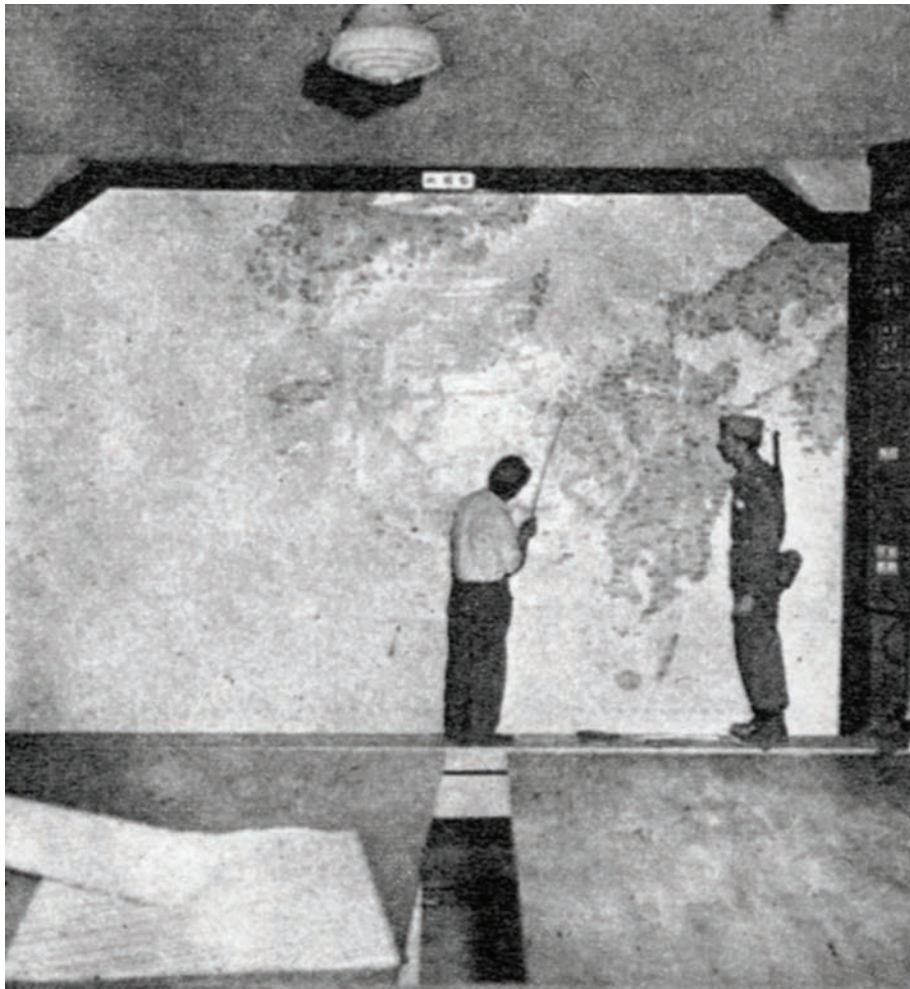
At 6 p.m. on March 16, the commanding general of the landing forces reported that organized resistance on Iwo Jima had ceased and that the island was secured except for the small pocket in the 5th



COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

**As the battle raged on, equipment, vehicles and other supplies were destroyed or rendered useless.**





LEATHERNECK FILE PHOTO

**Above: A Japanese soldier explains to a Marine guard how this huge, mechanized map was used by his navy's senior leaders.**



LEATHERNECK FILE PHOTO

**A lone Japanese soldier sends messages from Sasebo's once-buzzing underground radio-monitor room.**

Division zone of action and mopping-up operations. But that small pocket was to require another 12 days to eliminate, and the mopping up was to cost the lives of a considerable number of Marines in all three divisions.

After an unsuccessful attempt to induce Col Ikeda, commanding officer of the Japanese 145th Infantry Regiment, to surrender, CT 26 (LT 3/28 attached) attacked to the north on March 17. LT 1/26 had reached the north coast at Kitano Point and initiated an attack around the point, and captured Hill 165 while CT 25 closed in on the remaining enemy from the north and east forming a pocket of resistance in a rocky cave-studded gorge.

Throughout March 18, flame-thrower tanks and demolition teams were busy slowly but surely destroying the caves in the canyon that ran down to the sea. The enemy continued bitterly and fanatically to resist. At 1 p.m., on March 19, LT 3/27 moved into the southeast end of the gorge and began to push slowly toward the sea.

At 10:30 a.m. the dedication and memorial service of the 5th Division cemetery was held. The 13th Marines were re-embarked, and the 27th Marines were loading over White Beach.

On March 22, CT 26 (LTs 3/28 and 3/27 attached) continued to attack down the gorge as the main enemy resistance was now centered on the southwest bank. In the late afternoon of March 23, organized enemy resistance appeared to break. At 10:45 a.m. on March 25, CT 28 (LT 3/26 attached) had reached the coastal cliff and by 6 p.m., the 5th Division area was mopped up.

The 5th Division zone of action was turned over to the 3rd Marine Division at 0800, March 26.

The 5th Division completed re-embarkation and sailed on March 27, via Eniwetok, for Hawaii. The Division had killed 11,314 Japanese and captured 62, while suffering 2,501 dead and missing, and 6,218 wounded.

The Division was initially included in plans to land the 5th Corps in the Kushikino area during the proposed invasion of the Japanese mainland but the Japanese government sued for peace on Aug. 10 and orders were changed to participating in the occupation of Japan.

The Division reached Sasebo on Sept. 22 and was assigned the mission of occupying the city and patrolling roads leading into Sasebo.

By Nov. 30, with the most exacting requirements of the operation completed, the 5th Division was preparing to embark for return to the United States in mid-December. 🐼

# Passing the Word

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

## VA Plans Expansion of Benefits For Toxic Exposure Claims

On May 27, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced two major decisions related to presumptive conditions associated with Agent Orange and particulate matter exposures during military service in Southwest Asia.

VA will begin implementing provisions of the William M. Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2021, adding three conditions to the list of those presumptively associated with exposure to herbicide agents, more commonly known as Agent Orange. Those conditions are bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinsonism.

“Many of our nation’s veterans have waited a long time for these benefits,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “VA will not make them wait any longer. This is absolutely the right thing to do for veterans and their families.”

VA will apply the provisions of court orders related to *Nehmer vs. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, which may result in an earlier date for entitlement to benefits for veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam during the Vietnam War. Vietnam War-era veterans and their survivors, who previously filed and were denied benefits for one of these three new

presumptive conditions, will have their cases automatically reviewed without the need to refile a claim. VA will send letters to impacted veterans and survivors.

The VA Secretary recently concluded the first iteration of a newly formed internal VA Process to review scientific evidence to support rulemaking resulting in the recommendation to consider creation of new presumptions of service connection for respiratory conditions based on VA’s evaluation of a National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine report and other evidence. VA’s review supports initiation of rulemaking to address the role that particulate matter pollution plays in generating chronic respiratory conditions based on VA’s evaluation of a National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine report and other evidence. VA’s review supports initiation of rulemaking to address the role that particulate matter pollution plays in generating chronic respiratory conditions, which may include asthma, rhinitis and sinusitis for veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the Persian Gulf War and/or after Sept. 19, 2001, or in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan during the Persian Gulf War.

“VA is establishing a holistic approach to determining toxic exposure presump-

tion going forward. We are moving out smartly in initiating action to consider these and other potential new presumptions, grounded in science and in keeping with my authority as Secretary of VA,” said McDonough.

VA is initiating rulemaking to consider adding the respiratory conditions mentioned previously and will conduct broad outreach efforts to reach impacted veterans and encourages them to participate in the rulemaking process.

For more information, visit <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/index.asp>.

VA

## Nonprofit Helps Veterans’ Stories Go Viral on TikTok

Whether it’s the stigma surrounding mental health in the military or the heavy burden many individuals carry, it’s too often that veterans don’t have the opportunity to share their stories in a safe and inclusive environment. One national nonprofit, dedicated to sharing these stories, has found an unlikely platform to keep history alive and allow veterans the therapeutic benefits of sharing: mobile video-sharing app TikTok.

Veterans Breakfast Club (VBC) is a national nonprofit that collects and shares



Veterans share their stories during a “VBC Greatest Generation Live” Zoom meeting hosted by Veterans Breakfast Club executive director Todd DePastino, pictured in the top left corner. The organization, which has gained a following on TikTok thanks to its entertaining videos about military life, is dedicated to giving veterans digital platforms for sharing their personal experiences.

COURTESY OF VETERANS BREAKFAST CLUB



LCPL MARK MORALES, USMC

**SUNSET PARADE**—For the first time in nearly four years, “The Commandant’s Own” U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps performed for an audience during a Tuesday Sunset Parade at the Marine Corps War Memorial in Arlington, Va., June 8. The 2018 and 2019 parade seasons were held at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., while the war memorial was undergoing renovations, and the 2020 parade season was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The hosting official for the evening was Mr. Robert D. Hogue, Counsel for the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and U.S. Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand of New York was in attendance as the guest of honor.

stories of veterans from all across the country. Meeting virtually each week on Zoom, the organization provides a safe and welcoming environment for veterans to share their experiences in order to keep this living history alive.

These conversations have uncovered bite-sized, heart-warming and hilarious stories that have gone viral on TikTok, garnering millions of views—like a corpsman’s loose lime green underwear escaping down an airfield or servicemembers going months without showering and smelling Suave Strawberry Fields shampoo for the first time.

“With less than one-half of one percent of our nation’s population serving on active duty, most Americans are far removed from military life. But people know there’s something special about those who have served. They can hear it



in veterans’ language, values and inside jokes. They can sense the emotion around veterans’ stories. Americans know, even if they can’t fully articulate it, that serving in the military includes devoting your

life to something larger than yourself,” said Todd DePastino, VBC executive director. “They want to share in it and be inspired by it, even if they don’t serve themselves. TikTok is perfect for offering glimpses into the otherwise hidden world of our servicemembers. Those glimpses, over time, round out a portrait of life that people relate to and admire.”

In addition to views, these viral videos have brought more veterans to the non-profit who want to share their stories and connect without judgment or traditional barriers.

For retired Marine Colonel Brad

Washabaugh, participating in VBC has been a valuable experience.

“All veterans have stories to tell. No matter how many years a veteran served, their time in uniform is often the most meaningful time in their lives. All too often these stories go untold,” said Washabaugh. “The Veterans Breakfast Club does a wonderful job of bringing veterans and non-veterans alike to share stories that inform, inspire, provide a good laugh and for some, heal. As a Marine Corps veteran, I always look forward to being a part of this special community and sharing experiences through the various media available to the VBC, including TikTok.”

Follow @veteransbreakfastclub on TikTok or learn more about the organization’s mission—as well as how to join future Zoom sessions—at [www.veteransbreakfastclub.org](http://www.veteransbreakfastclub.org).

Rachel Burnett



## Sgt Edgar Harrell

Sergeant Edgar Harrell, the last living Marine to survive the sinking of USS *Indianapolis* (CA-35), a World War II cruiser, died May 8 at a veterans home in Tennessee. He was 96.

On July 30, 1945, Harrell was assigned to *Indianapolis* when the ship was struck by Japanese torpedoes just after midnight. *Indianapolis* sank in only 12 minutes, stranding her crew in the water without an adequate number of life rafts or life jackets.

It wasn't until Aug. 2, 1945, after a Navy patrol bomber pilot on a routine flight saw the ship's wreckage, that rescue operations began. Of *Indianapolis*' 1,196-member crew, 900 men were still alive after the ship sank. By the time the rescue was completed, there were only 316 survivors.

"Many people do not know the horror we encountered," Harrell told *Leatherneck* in a 2015 article.

Some of the men didn't survive the first night due to injuries sustained during the attack on the ship. As the days went on, others died from exhaustion, exposure, dehydration and salt-water poisoning. Many of the men fell prey to the sharks circling the area.

During their ordeal, the men tried to stay in a group by fastening their life jackets together, but as some of the men grew tired, they would drift away. Others began hallucinating and swam away from the group.

Decades later, Harrell and his son wrote a book about the ordeal, "Out of the Depths: An Unforgettable WW II Story of Survival, Courage and the Sinking of the USS *Indianapolis*," touching upon some of the lesser-known aspects of the story.

After his rescue, Edgar Harrell returned to civilian life where he owned and operated a successful window company in Illinois for 35 years. In his later years, Harrell conducted numerous speaking engagements, giving audiences his first-hand account of what happened during those days adrift, waiting for rescue.

At a ceremony in Nashville, Tenn., on Aug. 10, 2018, he finally pinned on the rank of sergeant; the ship's sinking prevented Harrell's promotion 73 years earlier. Harrell was also the recipient of the Congressional Gold Medal.

Nancy S. Lichtman

**Nancy Ellen (Boothe) Ashley, 73,** of Abingdon, Va. She graduated from

high school in 1966 and then enlisted in the Marine Corps. She was stationed at MCAS El Toro.

**PFC Norabel Audette, 91,** of Falmouth, Mass. She enlisted in 1952.

**1stLt Walter Boecher, 99,** of Queensbury, N.Y. He served in the Pacific during WW II and was wounded during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

**MSgt Melvin E. Brown, 65,** in Salisbury, N.C. He served 33 years in the Marine Corps.

**SSgt Harry LaRue Butler, 95,** of Memphis, Tenn. During WW II he served with 2ndMarDiv in the Pacific. He saw action on Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa.

**GySgt Charles Calef, 87,** of Washington, Iowa. He served in the Korean War and Vietnam War. He was the recipient of the Silver Star for his actions as a radio operator for C/1/1, 1stMarDiv in Korea on Aug. 10, 1952.

According to the award citation, "After his radio was completely destroyed by enemy mortar fragments ... Private First Class Calef served as a runner and moved ... from one foxhole to another carrying messages, although under constant enemy small-arms and mortar fire. When ordered to withdraw to the reverse slope of the hill, he unhesitatingly volunteered to return to the devastated area to assist in evacuating four wounded Marines."

**Adam J. Deshler, 45,** of Morgantown, W.Va. He was a Marine Corps veteran who worked as a school bus driver.

**Wallace P.L. "Wally" Draves, 81,** of Forestville, Wis. After his high school graduation, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and served for three years. He later opened his own commercial refrigeration business.

**Peter B. Durham, 73,** of Los Angeles, Calif. He served one tour in Vietnam. He later had a 35-year career with the Los Angeles Police Department.

**James H. "Jim" Engles, 83,** of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted after his 1956 high school graduation. He later had a career in the paper industry.

**John J. Finch, 83,** of Manitowoc, Wis. He was a Marine who served from 1957-1959.

**Francisco A. Gonzales, 80,** of Albuquerque, N.M. After completing his enlistment in the Marine Corps, he became a carpenter.

**Sgt Martin "Gonzo" Gonzalez, 40,** of Houston, Texas. He served in 3rd Bn, 5th

Marines and was a veteran of Operation Phantom Fury in 2004. His awards include two Bronze Stars with combat "V" and three Purple Hearts.

**Leopoldo Griego, 96,** of Albuquerque, N.M. During WW II he saw action in the Pacific with 1stMarDiv. He was wounded during the fighting on Peleliu. His awards include a Purple Heart.

**Jason T. Howard, 44,** of Hockessin, Del. He enlisted after his high school graduation. He later attended college and was commissioned a second lieutenant. He deployed to Iraq in 2003 and 2004 with 1st Bn, 4th Marines.

**Kenneth F. Ishler, 77,** of Bellefonte, Pa. Before starting his plumbing business, he served in the Marine Corps.

**Ty M. Kander, 25,** of Los Angeles, Calif. He served from 2015 to 2020 and was an F-35B Lightning II mechanic with VMX-22. He later worked for SpaceX as an electromechanical technician and as a friction star weld technician.

**Sgt Bettie M. Kaufman, 90,** of Chicago, Ill. She enlisted when she was 18 and served during the Korean War. She later had a career with Elgin Watch Company as a customer service representative.

**LCpl Joseph W. "Bill" Koi, 75,** of Whiting, Ind. He served a tour in Vietnam where he was wounded.

**Leo B. Kuehl, 104,** of Jenkintown, Pa. During WW II he served with 4th MAW in the Pacific.

**1stLt Nez Kusnierz, 73,** of Arcadia, Calif. He was an air support control officer attached to the Da Nang Direct Air Support Center in 1969. He also spent time as the OIC at the helicopter direction center at Fire Support Base Baldy. His awards include the Navy Commendation Medal. He was a member of the MCA.

**Jerome Lavasseur, 98,** of Harrison, Mich. He was a Marine who served in the Pacific in WW II. He later owned a construction company.

**Wayne T. Lawniczak, 75,** of Oconto Falls, Wis. After serving in the Marine Corps, he had a career as a long-haul truck driver.

**Albert Dennis Leahy Jr., 87,** of Exeter, N.H. He was commissioned a second lieutenant after his graduation from Yale. He served at MCRD San Diego and Twentynine Palms. He later attended Harvard Law School and was appointed a district court judge.

**Cpl Francois L. Lemieux, 82,** of

Putnam, Conn. He enlisted after his 1957 graduation from high school. He served three years and then returned to his hometown where he owned and operated his own gas station. He was a member of the MCL and the MCA.

**LtCol Russell Lloyd Jr.** He served two tours in Vietnam. His awards included a Bronze Star.

**Capt Harry W. "Bill" Luplow II**, 83, of Little Rock, Ark. He was an A-4 Skyhawk pilot who flew more than 200 missions in Vietnam. Before he was commissioned a second lieutenant, he was the captain of the football team at the University of Arkansas and was drafted by the Denver Broncos.

**MSgt James D. Mueller**, 84, of Brook Park, Ohio. He had a 20-year career in the Marine Corps in radio communication and signal intelligence as a Chinese language translator. He served two tours in Vietnam and completed training at Defense Language Institute, Monterey, Calif. He also earned a master's degree in Chinese linguistics from The Ohio State University. After retiring, he started a second career as a newspaper correspondent and later as an editor in Ohio. He was a member of the MCA.

**Nathaniel M. Navarro**, 32, in Denver, Colo. He was a Marine who served on

active duty for five years.

**1stLt Elizabeth "Bebe" (Faas) Rice**, 89, of Potomac Falls, Va. After graduating from college with a degree in English literature and medieval history, she was commissioned a second lieutenant. She was an adjutant at HQ Bn, Henderson Hall, Va., and an instructor at Quantico. She later embarked on a career as an author and published 18 books for children and young adults. She was the daughter of a WW I Marine and the wife of Marine MajGen W.H. Rice.

**Frank R. Riegler**, 73, of Hamilton, Ohio. He was wounded while serving in Vietnam. His awards include a Purple Heart.

**Michael Roadcup**, 69, of Richmond, Va. He served in the Marine Corps and later went into the Baptist ministry.

**Paul B. Randolph**, 90, of Lake Mirada, Calif. He enlisted in 1951 and was assigned to 1st MAW. He was an antiaircraft artillery gunner, firing on MiGs during the Korean War.

**Leon T. "Leo" Rys**, 86, of Luxemburg, Wis. During his Marine Corps career, he served in the Korean War and the Vietnam War.


**Cpl Paul C. Tarabrella**, 98, of Monongahela, Pa. He served from 1942-1946 and was assigned to 2ndMarDiv. He

saw action on Guam and in the Marianas. After the war, he had a three-decade career with the West Penn Power company. He also was an ambulance dispatcher and a volunteer with Meals on Wheels. He was a member of the Mon Valley Leathernecks.

**John R. West**, 89, of Mission Viejo, Calif. He served in the Korean War. After 12 years in the Marine Corps, he completed his education, earning a Ph.D. He was a professor and dean at the college level for more than 40 years.

**Elizabeth A. "Beth" Wilson**, 66, of Algoma, Wis. She enlisted in 1974 and served for two years. She met her future husband while stationed at MCB Quantico.

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 or n.lichtman@mca-marines.org. 🇺🇸



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<b>DEC 4-13</b> Battle of the Bulge Bastogne – Brussels	<b>JUN 1-9</b> D-Day "The Longest Day" France – Normandy
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USMC VETERAN OWNED & OPERATED SINCE 1987

## SOUND OFF

[continued from page 6]

River but, even with Google, I could not find them. It would have been more judicious to employ an old map or have the same illustrator draw a map with all the positions referenced. That way he is still employed, and you would have had a much better article.

I enjoy your magazine. My only connection here is my son, Chuck Risio, a retired Marine Corps colonel.

Chet Risio  
Rye Brook, N.Y.

### History of the 8th Marine Regiment

At the end of World War II, the 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division was deactivated. In 1950, 40 Marines were transferred from Quantico, Va., to the 2ndMarDiv at Camp Lejeune, N.C., to reactivate the 9th Marine Regiment. I was assigned to 1st Battalion. The reserves filled in to get us up to strength. Then we shipped out to the Mediterranean for six months. Our regimental commander was Colonel Master. He was known by his men as "Jungle Jim."

1st Sgt Harry O. Blake Jr., USMC (Ret)  
1946 to 1968  
Indianapolis, Ind.

### Climb Up Mount Fuji, June 1957

My father, Cpl A.F. "Blu" Blumenthal, USMC, 1956 to 1962, read Sea Stories in the April issue. His connection with the story, "My Trip Up Mount Fuji," by Charles Logan Delp from Garden Grove, Calif., led him to recount his journey up Mount Fuji, on June 1, 1957, 64 years ago from the day I write this letter. Here's his account:

"I also made the Mount Fuji climb when I was a private first class in Company A, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines. There are three trails up the mountain. The South Trail which 2nd Bn used, the North Trail which



COURTESY OF AMBER BLUMENTHAL

Cpl A.F. "Blu" Blumenthal, USMC, stands at the rim of the crater at the end of the Gotemba Trail, June 1, 1957.

3rd Bn used, and the Gotemba Trail which 1st Bn used. The view from the top is one of those things that can't be described. You have to see it for yourself. Of the memories I have from my six years of service, to have stood on the top of one of the most famous mountains/volcanos, is at the top. Thank you, USMC, for the memory."

Amber Blumenthal  
Columbus Township, Mich.

### Vietnam Veteran: "Tell Our Story!"

I am writing you asking to do this and other Vietnam vets a favor. Would you kindly write the current Commandant a letter asking the reason why the Marine Corps does not teach its recruits about our service? Does he not think Dewey Canyon, Battle of Hue, Siege of Khe Sanh or the taking of Hill 881, twice, was worth teaching? How about the CAP teams,

Operation Starlite or the two drafts of Marines in 1966 and 1968? These people were just as good Marines as the ones who came before. In fact, most of today's Marines don't know that about 70 percent of the Marines in World War II were drafted. We were taught that, and I'm really sorry, this new breed of Commandants doesn't appreciate the courage of folks like Colonel Studt, General Walt, Sergeant Major Brewster, Major Bennett, Col Camp, Gen McTompkins, Staff Sergeant James, Sergeant Barry Miller, Corporal Nic Dunbar, Cpl Bean and many others. If the letter in your June [Sound Off] magazine is correct, then it is the Commandant who must continue not telling the stories or telling them. That's leadership.

Bill Aiello  
Feura Bush, N.Y.

### A Poem for Vietnam Veterans

The Vietnam War was a very sad time in our history. There were protests in our streets and on our campuses. When returning home, some of our brave Marines were spat on and referred to as "baby killers," just to name a few.

The day I graduated from boot camp in December 1967 was a proud day for me. It's hard to fathom the minds of those individuals who want to live free but don't want to fight for it. Merle Haggard said it pretty good in his song, "The Fightin' Side Of Me." His best line in the song was, "When they're runnin' down my country, man, they're walkin' on the fightin' side of me."

While going through some of my Ma-


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If you have already included MCA in your will or estate plan, please let us know. We want to thank you for your commitment to our Marines.



rine Corps memorabilia, I came across this poem that I've enclosed. I don't remember when or where it came into my possession, but I felt led to share it with your readers. I'm sure this poem will hit home with a lot of our brothers.

MGySgt George L. Moore, USMC (Ret)  
Victorville, Calif.

### A Marine

(Quang Tri Province, Vietnam June 6, 1969)

Take a man and put him alone,  
Put him twelve thousand miles  
from home,  
Empty his heart of all but his blood,  
And make him live in sweat and mud.

This was the life I had to live,  
And my soul to the devil I had to give.  
You have your parties and grow  
your hair,  
While we young men are dying  
somewhere.

With your painted signs on the  
White House lawn,  
"Let's all get out of Vietnam."  
Well, you have your parties,  
use your signs,  
And have your fun,  
But then refuse to use a gun.

There's nothing else for you to do,  
Then I'm supposed to die for you.  
But there's one thing that you  
don't know,  
And that's where I think you should go.


I'm already here, and it's too late,  
I've traded my love just for hate.  
I'll hate you till the day I die,  
You made me hear my buddies cry.

I saw his leg, plus the blood he shed,  
Then I heard one say, "This one's dead."  
It was a large price for him to pay,  
Just to let you live another day.

He had the guts to fight and die,  
For keeping the freedom you live by.  
But, by his dying, your life he buys,  
Tell me who really cares if a  
Marine dies?

You simply start a war with the  
things you do,  
Then send us over to die for you.

Author Unknown

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. 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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# Reader Assistance

Edited by Sara W. Bock

## Reunions

*Editor's note: The following reunion information was current as of July 1. Given that the COVID-19 virus is still impacting future events, please continue to check with the reunion points of contact for the most up-to-date information.*

• **Marine Corps Engineer Assn.**, Sept. 23-25, Fredericksburg, Va. Contact Maj Charlie Dismore, USMC (Ret), (512) 394-9333, [www.marcorengasn.org](http://www.marcorengasn.org).

• **East Coast Drill Instructors Assn.**, Oct. 7-10, Parris Island, S.C. Contact SgtMaj Kenneth Miller, USMC (Ret), (828) 499-0224, [usmcpidi@charter.net](mailto:usmcpidi@charter.net).

• **Marine Security Guard Assn.**, Sept. 30-Oct. 4, Alexandria, Va. Contact Steve Maxwell, (440) 506-3311, [usmcmx@oh.rr.com](mailto:usmcmx@oh.rr.com).

• **USMC Vietnam Tankers Assn.**, Sept. 15, Warwick, R.I. Contact John Wear, 16605 Forest Green Terrace, Elbert, CO 80106, (719) 495-5998, [johnwear2@verizon.net](mailto:johnwear2@verizon.net).

• **Marine Corps Cryptologic Assn.** is planning a reunion in September, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Edgar Kitt,

2250 Heavenly View Dr., Henderson, NV 89014, (702) 454-1646, [edgarkitt@earthlink.net](mailto:edgarkitt@earthlink.net).

• **Marine Corps Disbursing Assn.**, Aug. 8-12, Reno, Nev. Contact MGySgt Kevin Gascon, USMC (Ret), (760) 458-2655, [mojorisin68@hotmail.com](mailto:mojorisin68@hotmail.com), [www.usmcdisbursers.com](http://www.usmcdisbursers.com).

• **Marine Air Traffic Control Assn.**, Sept. 19-26, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Steve Harris, (830) 460-0953, [sandkh2@gmail.com](mailto:sandkh2@gmail.com).

• **26th Marines Assn. (26th Marine Regiment, and supporting units, all eras)**, Sept. 30-Oct. 4, San Diego, Calif. Contact Sonny Hollub, (512) 825-4730, [sonnyusmc@gmail.com](mailto:sonnyusmc@gmail.com), [www.26thMarines.com](http://www.26thMarines.com).

• **USMC Weather Service**, June 19-24, 2022, Overland Park, Kan. Contact Kathy Donham, (252) 342-8459, [kathy.donham@hotmail.com](mailto:kathy.donham@hotmail.com), or Dave Englert, [engertd@psci.net](mailto:engertd@psci.net).

• **11th Marine Regiment, OIF (20th anniversary)**, March 31-April 1, 2023, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Contact Casey Harsh, [casey.harsh@gmail.com](mailto:casey.harsh@gmail.com). Facebook group: The Cannon Cockers of OIF-1 (20-

Year Reunion 2023 Group).

• **STA Plt, 2/8 (1989-1993)** is planning a reunion. Contact Mike Moriarty, [mmoriarty81@comcast.net](mailto:mmoriarty81@comcast.net).

• **7th Engineer Bn Assn. (RVN)**, Sept. 9-12, Arlington, Va. Contact Norm Johnson, (810) 300-0782, [nwgj@outlook.com](mailto:nwgj@outlook.com).

• **11th Engineer Bn (RVN, 1966-1969)**, September 2022, O'Hare-Des Plaines, Ill. Contact Gene T. Spanos, (847) 532-2963, [genethemarine@gmail.com](mailto:genethemarine@gmail.com).

• **1/27 (1968)** is planning a reunion in July, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Felix Salmeron, (469) 583-0191, [mar463@aol.com](mailto:mar463@aol.com).

• **2/4 Assn.**, Aug. 4-7, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Contact Pete Gannon, (954) 648-7887, [diverplus@aol.com](mailto:diverplus@aol.com).

• **2/9**, Nov. 8-12, Arlington, Va. Contact Danny Schuster, [twoninencoic@aol.com](mailto:twoninencoic@aol.com), [www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org](http://www.2ndbattalion9thmarines.org).

• **"Stormy's" 3/3**, Sept. 27-30, Branson, Mo. Contact Burrell Landes, (303) 734-1458, [bhanon@comcast.net](mailto:bhanon@comcast.net), [www.stormys33.com](http://www.stormys33.com).

• **Battery Adjust, 3/11 (all eras)**, Aug. 25-29, Washington, D.C. Contact Brian Seals, (765) 580-2734, [bseals2013@gmail.com](mailto:bseals2013@gmail.com).

• **C/1/12 (RVN)**, Aug. 25-29, Washington, D.C. Contact Woody Hall, (931) 242-8432, [hwoodrow@charter.net](mailto:hwoodrow@charter.net).

• **I/3/1 (RVN, 1968-1969)**, Sept. 9-12, Tampa, Fla. Contact "Woody" Woodard, (727) 253-0961, [december251968@hotmail.com](mailto:december251968@hotmail.com).

• **Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan, Task Force Leatherneck (2009-2010)**, May 13-15, 2022, Quantico, Va. Contact reunion committee, [taskforceleatherneck@gmail.com](mailto:taskforceleatherneck@gmail.com).

• **Philippine Embassy Marines (1976-1977)**, Nov. 10, North Carolina. Contact Tim Craig, [phildream2017@gmail.com](mailto:phildream2017@gmail.com).

• **Marine Detachment, U.S. Naval Disciplinary Command Portsmouth, N.H.**, Sept. 20-25, Scranton, Pa. Contact Don Ferry, (972) 334-0609, [don.ferry1942@gmail.com](mailto:don.ferry1942@gmail.com).

• **TBS 3-66 & 4-66/38th and 39th OCC**, Oct. 25-28, Las Vegas. Contact Jack Sheehan, (401) 255-0387, [jacksheehanjtown@me.com](mailto:jacksheehanjtown@me.com), [www.usmc-thebasic-school-1966.com](http://www.usmc-thebasic-school-1966.com).

• **TBS 4-67, 5-67, 6-67 "Rally at the Alamo,"** Oct. 11-14, San Antonio, Texas. Contact Ken Pouch, (860) 881-6819, [kpouch5@gmail.com](mailto:kpouch5@gmail.com).

• **TBS, Co F, 6-70**, Oct. 21-24, Quantico, Va. Contact Col Tom Kanasky,

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USMC (Ret), (202) 366-3156, tlkanasky@earthlink.net, or Col Mitch Youngs, USMCR (Ret), (703) 493-9435, mitchyoungs@verizon.net.

• **TBS, Co I, 9-70**, Oct. 7-10, San Diego, Calif. Contact Mike Hoferlin, (573) 268-3824, mike.hoferlin@gmail.com.

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

• **TBS, Co D, 4-73**, is planning a 50th-anniversary reunion in 2023, Quantico, Va. Contact Col Bill Anderson, USMCR (Ret), (540) 850-4213, binche57@yahoo.com, or Col Bob Donaghue, USMCR (Ret), (614) 840-0267, ip350haven@comcast.net.

• **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.

• **USMC A-4 Skyhawkers**, Oct. 21-24, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact Mark Williams, 10432 Button Willow Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89134, (425) 327-6050, usmcskyhawker21@gmail.com.

• **Marine Air Base Squadrons-49**, Sept. 18, Earlville, Md. Contact Col

Chuck McGarigle, USMC (Ret), (609) 291-9617, (609) 284-2935, col\_of\_mar\_ret@comcast.net.

• **HMM-165/VMM-165 (all hands, all eras)**, Oct. 21-24, Glendale, Ariz. For details, visit [www.165whiteknights.com](http://www.165whiteknights.com).

#### Ships and Others

• **USS Canberra (CA-70/CAG-2)**, Oct. 13-17, Pittsburgh, Pa. Contact Ken Minick, 2115 Pride Ave., Belpre, OH 45714, (740) 423-8976.

• **USS Saratoga (CV/CVA/CVB-60)**, Oct. 20-24, Mobile, Ala. Contact Bill Lack, williamlack@gmail.com.

#### Mail Call

• Mark Pacey, markp@library.mstn.govt.nz, to hear from anyone who has information or photographs of U.S. Marines stationed in **New Zealand**, particularly in **Masterton**, as he is writing a book on the subject. His two groups of interest are the **3rd and 4th Defense Battalions** but any photographs of or information about any Marines serving in New Zealand would be of interest.

• Stephan Robertson, stephanrobertson91@gmail.com, to hear from anyone who is interested in supporting the construction of **Puller Park in Saluda, Va.**, a project of the Middlesex County Museum in

honor of hometown hero and Marine Corps legend LtGen Lewis B. "Chesty Puller." **Memorial bricks are available for purchase** and more information can be found at <https://middlesexmuseum.com>.

• John Simpson, jasmcl1953@gmail.com, to hear from or about **1stLt David M. THOMAS**, who was CO of **Transportation Co, 9th Motor Transportation Bn, 3rdMarDiv, Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, 1973-1974**.

#### Wanted

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

• Suzanne Oswald, oswaldesigns@aol.com, wants a **December 1950 issue of Leatherneck**, which features a photograph of her father.

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](mailto:s.bock@mca-marines.org), or write to Reader Assistance Editor, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134. 📧

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# Saved Round

By Nancy S. Lichtman



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**“OLD GIMLET EYE” IS WELCOMED BACK TO THE CORPS—** Brigadier General Smedley D. Butler is welcomed back to the Marine Corps by the 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps Major General John A. Lejeune on Dec. 28, 1925. BGen Butler was returning to active-duty service after a two-year stint as the Director of Public Safety for Philadelphia, Pa.

The city’s mayor, W. Freeland Kendrick, persuaded fellow Philadelphian BGen Butler to take the job to put an end to Prohibition-era bootlegging and the rampant crime plaguing the city. Butler also planned to streamline the police and fire departments and put an end to corruption. Kendrick had high hopes that his war-hero friend BGen Butler would be able to clean up the City of Brotherly Love, stating that Butler’s appointment should be a “notice to all evil-doers and law violators that Philadelphia will be a most unhealthy place for their operations.”

After Butler was sworn in to his new post on Jan. 7, 1924, he took action to curb illegal drinking by instructing the police force to clean up their districts and immediately begin conducting nighttime raids on the city’s numerous speakeasies. When the hard-charging Marine did a late-night inspection of several police districts to ensure the men were following that order, he was very vocal about his displeasure with what he observed.

According to the Jan. 10, 1924, edition of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, “the general swore at several lieutenants, shook his fist under their noses and bluntly ordered them ‘to get the hell out on the district and clean up.’” The paper further reported that an angry Butler had some choice words for several police officers he encountered who were “loafing in the lieutenant’s quarters.” “Why there are at least a dozen places selling liquor under your very nose?” he shouted at them. “Get the hell out of here and be damned quick about it. Don’t come back until you clean up.”

His military discipline and hard-nosed approach didn’t win him an overwhelming amount of support in either department or among elected officials. The last straw was when BGen Butler targeted Philadelphia’s finer hotels for allowing consumption of champagne on the premises during debutante season. Mayor Kendrick asked for Butler’s resignation in December 1925.

BGen Butler, a combat veteran and two-time recipient of the Medal of Honor, was later quoted as saying, “Cleaning up Philadelphia was worse than any battle I was ever in.”

To read more about Smedley Darlington Butler and his participation in halting a government overthrow, read “Major General Smedley Butler: How a Legendary Marine Thwarted a Planned Coup d’État” on page 32. 🦋

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