

# LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES





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# Contents

LEATHERNECK—MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

DECEMBER 2022  
VOL. 105, No. 12

## Features

### 14 Bury Me a Marine: The Private Who Saved the Marine Corps

By GySgt Chase McGrortyHunter, USMC

This article, which received an honorable mention in the 2022 *Leatherneck* Writing Contest, relates how congressman and Marine veteran Michael Mansfield was instrumental in passing The Douglas-Mansfield Act. Also dubbed “The Marine Corps Bill,” it amended the National Security Act of 1947, establishing that the Marine Corps would stand as its own branch of service, on June 28, 1952.

### 26 Hue Hospital: Feb. 5, 1968

By Jon Hull

This is an excerpt of the recently published book, “Needs of the Corps—The Ron Christmas Story,” the biography of Lieutenant General George R. “Ron” Christmas, USMC (Ret).

### 36 Toys for Tots: 75 Years of Delivering Joy to Children

By Jennifer Castro

For the past 75 years, the Toys for Tots program, along with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve, has led a campaign to collect new and unwrapped toys, providing millions of gifts annually to underprivileged children during the holiday season. A familiar part of the campaign is the seasonal poster advertisements, which can be seen in this article.

### 42 A Glimpse Behind a Promotion Board Curtain

By Capt Obakai Grandisson, USMC and Capt Sheldonia Simmers, USMC  
Marines may wonder what occurs inside promotion boards at HQMC. This article provides insight on general processes through observations made at a recent Enlisted to Warrant Officer Selection Board.

### 48 Morale on Tap: Marine’s Vietnam Beer Run Story Made into Movie

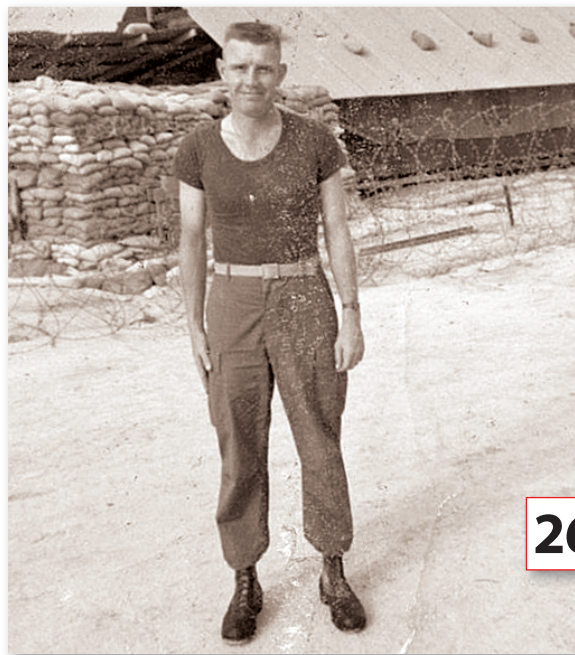
By 2ndLt Kyle Daly, USMC

“The Greatest Beer Run Ever” is a newly released film depicting the true story of veteran Marine John “Chickie” Donohue, played by Zac Efron, and how he ventured to war-torn Vietnam on a mission to track down his neighborhood friends and deliver them beer.

### 58 “Christmas Truce”

By F. Gerald Downey

This article from the *Leatherneck* archives describes how a truce with the NVA went horribly wrong, leaving an Army company in dire straits. Bad weather impacted medevacs, but a Marine helicopter pilot came to the rescue.



## Departments

- 2 Sound Off
- 8 In Every Clime and Place
- 18 Corps Connections
- 24 & 56 Leatherneck Laffs
- 32 We—the Marines
- 40 Sea Stories
- 64 Passing the Word
- 66 In Memoriam
- 71 Reader Assistance
- 72 Saved Round

**COVER:** Charles Fazzino was honored to be named the official artist for the Toys for Tots 75th Anniversary campaign and created the 3D poster for the campaign. Fazzino donated the poster to the Marine Corps and plans to donate 100 percent of the proceeds of the sale of the reproduction posters to the Marine Toys for Tots Foundation. To purchase the poster, visit: <https://www.fazzinogiftshop.com/product-page/75th-anniversary-toys-for-tots-official-poster>. 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.)

My uncle, George Epps, age 92, died last month. George was one of eight children born to William E. Epps Sr., and his wife Mary. My father was the eldest child.

George was the first veteran of the United States Marine Corps I met. Truthfully, I had no idea what that meant at the time. As a child, I played army in the woods with friends, but only later did I understand what it took for my uncle to successfully navigate Parris Island, S.C., and the other challenges Marines through the ages have encountered and met.

As a child, I was always comfortable around George. He had an easy way about him, a laid-back attitude, and a perpetual smile. His accent was a cross between a Southern drawl and a mountain

twang—common among the natives of the Appalachian Mountains of northeastern Tennessee.

At 19, I was thinking about enlisting in the military and was leaning toward the Marine Corps. My dad, a World War II Navy veteran, did not want me to be a Marine during the war in Vietnam and tried to dissuade me by saying, “You know, son, your Uncle George was a Marine. That’s a really tough outfit and I’m not sure you can hack that.” It had the opposite effect. I knew dad had a great affection and respect for his younger brother. I enlisted that very next day in the Marine Corps. Dad was right about one thing; it was a really tough outfit.

My respect for Uncle George increased, especially because he was from the “Old Corps” that had it even tougher than I did in boot camp. As far as I know, Uncle George was the first person in our family history to be a United States Marine. Two of my grandsons would also become Marines.

George was a member of the local

chapter of the American Legion where he served on the color guard. He was also very active in the Shriners and raised money for the charities supported by that organization. He also served as a volunteer at the Veterans Affairs hospital in nearby Johnson City, Tenn.

He was a faithful man who enjoyed reading his Bible, fishing, spending time with his family, and telling stories. On Aug. 18, in the comfort of his home, he peacefully passed from this world to the next. Sometimes preachers will say of someone who has died that, “He was a good man.” Uncle George really was a good man.

After the Marine Corps, I entered the ministry. I left Tennessee for good in 1980, going wherever the ministry took me. Even though the only correspondence we had in recent years was via Christmas cards, I have a sensation of loss at the death of Uncle George. He really *was* one of the good guys.

David Epps  
Senoia, Ga.

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# Leatherneck

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## No Better Friend

I've been enjoying *Leatherneck's* articles on mascots and war dogs. Marines have always managed to find dogs of various sizes and questionable ancestry to accompany them around the world. Those of us in the 1st Marine Division band in Vietnam were no exception. We acquired a mascot at Division headquarters in the Freedom Hill area of Vietnam in 1968 (see photo on right).

Capt Jesse Sunderland, USMC (Ret)  
Meridian, Miss.

## Articles Provoked Great Memories

Your story, "Pocket-Sized Storyboards: Zippos Carried into Combat Were More than Just Cigarette Lighters," in the July issue and, "Food for Thought: War is Difficult Enough, Even Without Ham and Lima Beans" in the September issue about the John Wayne can opener brought back so many memories.

My Zippo was a last-minute pickup from my dad, which he received as a gift. He didn't smoke, but I did. I quit after my Vietnam tour which is where I wore the dog tags with the John Wayne (see below). And yes, we all hated the "ham and mothers."

Capt Doug Caldwell  
USMC, 1965-1979  
Plano, Texas



COURTESY OF CAPT JESSE SUNDERLAND, USMC (RET)

Jesse Sunderland feeds the newly acquired mascot at Division headquarters in the Freedom Hill area of Vietnam in 1968.

## Guadalcanal Marine Tells His Story

I met the sergeant in the parking lot of my co-op—a moment that would turn out to be an incredible act of serendipity for us both. I noticed that he was wearing a baseball cap that said, "WW2 VETERAN."



COURTESY OF CAPT DOUG CALDWELL

Capt Caldwell wore these dog tags with the "John Wayne" attached while serving in Vietnam. The Zippo lighter was passed down from his father.

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## Farewell To Patty Everett



JASON MONROE

*Leatherneck* Editorial/Production Coordinator Patricia “Patty” Everett recently announced her retirement from *Leatherneck*. Patty has been supporting Marines, Marine Corps Association (MCA) members and magazine readers for more than 41 years. She started as a typesetter with the MCA in 1981, working on programs, newsletters and cruise books. In 1987, she moved over to *Leatherneck* as the editorial assistant, and since then has been the reader’s best friend. Whether it’s tracking down a rare back issue of *Leatherneck* or researching old articles and photos, she exhausts all possibilities to find answers to the questions that come in daily via phone and email.

She once fielded a request from a reader who was trying to find a copy of the magazine with a particular pinup girl featured inside. One of the reader’s Marine buddies had named his daughter after the pinup girl and the daughter, now a grown woman, wanted a copy of that magazine as a keepsake. He didn’t know exactly which month, or even which year he was looking for, but Patty found it, after looking through three years’ worth of back issues.

During Patty’s tenure with MCA and *Leatherneck*, there have been many advances in technology that changed how the magazine is produced. Patty’s typesetting machine is long gone, but she adapted to the changes, becoming a whiz at word processing, spreadsheets, internet research and digital proofreading.

Here at *Leatherneck*, we will miss working with her. She kept us organized and she handled so many details every day. But we are very happy for the new chapter that she is about to begin.

Patty, you have our word that we will continue to look after our readers, exactly the way you did for the last 41 years. So have a seat, put your feet up, and enjoy retirement. You stand relieved.

Nancy S. Lichtman

“Thank you for your service to our country. Because of you, I’m still here,” I said and saluted. He gazed at me through piercing brown eyes of an erect bull of a man at least 20 years my senior. “Thank you, Son. It’s not often that anyone even remembers. Most of us are dropping before another enemy,” he chortled.

I told him that I was a World War II buff, and our chat led to an invitation for me to join him and his wife for coffee

and conversation. This encounter would be the beginning of a friendship.

He was sitting on his couch in the living room of his apartment when I entered. He motioned for me to join him in a disarmingly avuncular fashion. His sweet and diminutive wife immediately served espresso and Italian pastries. “I hope you like your coffee strong!” she laughed. “And I baked all this myself!” she proudly proclaimed.

“I don’t talk about the war to anyone, but I like you like a son, so fire away,” he said. For some reason, I was the chosen one who uncorked the bottle and released the genie. I shall never know the why of his willingness to open up to the horror that most vets keep tightly locked. All I remember was that he was a Marine in the Pacific campaign, and I was about to be exposed to a reality only poorly glimpsed through John Wayne movies, textbooks and documentaries.

“So, you want to know what it was really like? Well, I’ll tell you. Guadalcanal was hell and the [Japanese] didn’t give a damn about dyin’. Sure, we were all scared when those bastards launched a screamin’ banzai attack across Henderson field, but I gutted lots of them with my bayonet.” I watched as he seemed to be back in another world, moving on the couch to an attack of imaginary demons. As he quieted down, he looked at me and his eyes glazed over as he said, “I lost a lot of brothers in ‘42.”

That was the beginning of many encounters with the greatest generation. So many revelations of a world at war that had been sealed for decades. This warrior had survived the Pacific campaign, all the island hopping from the Solomons to Okinawa. He had done it unscathed physically, but inside . . . His openness would have been enough, but he even gifted me with a captured Japanese battle flag.

In the Park Hill section of southwestern Yonkers, N.Y., there still exists a small population of Italians. Most are very old, but a fragment of younger people still clings to a once vibrant past in stately hilltop mansions. Most of the cafes and restaurants are gone, but for the sergeant’s birthday, my wife and I were invited to a landmark Italian restaurant. What made it special was the wall of honor displaying framed photos of vets from WW II, Korea, and Vietnam—living and deceased, KIA, MIA, and POWs. I had checked it out before the party and had the sergeant give me a 1940s photo of himself, a frayed black and white of this handsome young man in full dress uniform. I photoshopped the image and converted it to a perfect sepia-toned framed work. With the entire extended family present at this gala event, I had the owner of the restaurant place it in a reserved space on the wall. It was a moment I and my new familia shall always treasure.

As my wife and I were departing, I swear I heard the wall whisper, “Remember me, Remember me.” And I do remember the sergeant and all those other haunting visages

He declined in health slowly over the





Quarters at the school demonstration area at MCB Quantico, Va., in 1952.

COURTESY OF CPL JOHN MESSIA JR., USMCR (RET)

next six months until, inevitably, he joined his brothers. Always will his memory be a burning flame in my heart and mind. Semper Fi, Marine!

Gerald L. Becker  
Bronxville, N.Y.

### MCB Quantico Mainside, 1952

As a *Leatherneck* loyal reader, I have been reminiscing back to 1952 as a 17-year-old PFC when I reported to MCB Quantico, Va., during the Korean Conflict. I was assigned to the school demonstration unit. Being assigned to quarters located near the base air strip, I viewed many World War II Corsair aircraft parked and positioned in line on the strip in military order.

There was a section called Q-Town adjacent to the base which only had four businesses that I recall: a cleaner, tailor shop, bar and grille café, and a jewelry store. At the street's end was wooden shacks erected ending main street.

There were three camps off Highway 1, Camp Barrett, Camp Goettge and Camp Upshur, and a version of the Iwo Jima statue had been erected at the base entrance in Triangle. There was undeveloped land at the entrance with only one business that handled groceries, the post office,

[continued on page 68]

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# In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Kyle Watts

## MIRAMAR, CALIF.

### VMFA-314 Black Knights Return From Historic Deployment

The “Black Knights” of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314 returned Aug. 11 from their deployment with Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 9 aboard USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72). The Black Knights are the first Marine Corps squadron to deploy the F-35C Lightning II aboard an aircraft carrier.

While underway for more than 200 days, the *Abraham Lincoln* Carrier Strike Group sailed more than 65,000 nautical miles conducting deterrence and presence operations, demonstrating the interoperability of the Navy and Marine Corps team. By leveraging their complementary authorities and capabilities, this team advances the prosperity, security and promise of a free and open, rules-based order.

“The Black Knights’ successful deployment of F-35C Lightning II aircraft aboard USS *Abraham Lincoln* further reinforces 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing’s (MAW) com-



MC3 HAN PUYU, USN

Marines assigned to the “Black Knights” of VMFA-314 exercise on the flight deck of USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72) on July 28.

An F-35C Lightning II assigned to VMFA-314 prepares to launch from the flight deck of *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72) on Nov. 15, 2021. *Abraham Lincoln* was underway conducting routine operations in the U.S. 3rd Fleet Area of Responsibility.



1STLT CHARLES ALLEN, USMC



LCPL MICHAEL TAGGART, USMC

**Marines with 3rdMarDiv pass in review during a battle colors rededication ceremony rehearsal on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, Sept. 13. The ceremony commemorated the Division's 80th Anniversary and its legacy of valor, honor and fidelity.**

mitment to naval integration,” said BGen Robert B. Brodie, 3rd MAW Assistant Wing Commander. “This historic deployment is a testament to our readiness and lethality as we project warfighting capabilities whenever and wherever our nation calls.”

Through the course of this deployment, VMFA-314 flew nearly 1,200 sorties and logged more than 2,200 flight hours. The Black Knights and CVW-9 participated in joint Exercise Valiant Shield, bilateral exercises Noble Fusion and Jungle Warfare, Exercise Rim of the Pacific and dual carrier operations in the South China Sea with the *Carl Vinson* Carrier Strike Group.

VMFA-314 was the first Marine Corps squadron to receive the F-35C Lightning II after retiring their legacy F/A-18C aircraft. The squadron is made up of approximately 200 Marines and Sailors.

As the Marine Corps’ largest aircraft wing, 3rd MAW continues to “Fix, Fly and Fight” and remains combat-ready, deployable on short notice and lethal when called into action.

For more on the squadron’s homecoming, visit: [www.dvidshub.net/unit/3MAW](http://www.dvidshub.net/unit/3MAW).

1stLt Duane Kampa, USMC

## OKINAWA, JAPAN

### 3rd Marine Division Celebrates 80 Years of Fidelity, Honor, Valor

The 3rd Marine Division commemorated its 80th anniversary during a battle colors rededication ceremony at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Sept. 14. The Division, which earned the nickname “The Fighting Third,” was activated at Camp Elliot in San Diego, Sept. 16, 1942.

“We are honored to recognize and celebrate the anniversary of 3rd Marine Division and the service and sacrifice of the Marines and Sailors who have stood in these ranks and—war by war, battle by battle, and day by day—built the great legacy of fidelity, honor and valor that we stand on today,” said MajGen Jay Barger, the Division’s commanding general, as he addressed an audience featuring hundreds of U.S. Marines and Sailors, along with multiple senior leaders from the Japan Self-Defense Force.

Since its inception, the 3rdMarDiv has primarily operated in the Indo-Pacific region. During World War II, it fought in the campaigns on Bougainville, Guadalcanal, Guam and Iwo Jima, where many Marines demonstrated extraordinary heroism on the battlefield.

Following World War II, the Division

was deactivated Dec. 28, 1945, and then reactivated Jan. 7, 1952. In August 1953, 3rdMarDiv arrived in Japan, supporting peace and security throughout the region. In March 1956, the Division moved to Okinawa where it remained as an expeditionary force-in-readiness until 1965.

On May 6, 1965, the 3rdMarDiv opened the Marine compound at Da Nang Air Base in Vietnam. The Division subsequently operated combat bases at Da Nang, Phu Bai, Quang Tri and Dong Ha. The Division departed Vietnam in November 1969 and moved to Camp Courtney, Okinawa, where it is presently located. During the Vietnam War, 32 “Caltrap” Marines and Sailors earned the Medal of Honor.

“The troops I commanded in Vietnam [and] the ones that I commanded throughout my career have always been top of the line, well trained, disciplined, motivated, and flexible,” said Col Robert Modrzejewski, who was the recipient of the Medal of Honor in Vietnam during one of multiple tours with 3rdMarDiv. “Marines are adaptable ... the technology [and] the weapons are more sophisticated [today] ... as far as ability, I can’t tell the difference.”

The legacy of 3rdMarDiv continued

through the Global War on Terrorism, supporting combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“To be a part of The Fighting Third means being mentally strong and physically strong,” said Sgt Apreanna Johnson, an Afghanistan veteran currently serving as the color sergeant and supporting logistics for 4th Marine Regiment. “My specialty may be supply, but I understand that I am also a Marine rifleman and must always be ready to deploy and fight.”

In the midst of emerging threats, the 3rdMarDiv continues to play a significant role in the evolution of the Marine Corps from furthering concepts such as Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations to standing up the Corps’ first Marine Littoral Regiment.

“We remain a ‘fight now’ force. We

**Col Matt Hakola, right, Combined Exercise Coordination Cell (CECC) Co-Director, MARCENT, awards Col Saud T.N. Al-Oqaily, CECC Co-Director, Saudi Armed Forces, a plaque during the closing ceremony for Exercise Native Fury 22 at Yanbu Commercial Port, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Aug. 25.**

stand ready—along with the rest of III MEF, our allies and partners, and the entire Joint Force—from mainland Japan to the Philippines and beyond,” Bargeron said. “Together, we operate within range of clear threats to peace and security, and we do so with great confidence, a confidence that is rooted in the commitment we share with our allies and partners, in the trust of our fellow Marines and Sailors, and in the legacy forged by those who went before us.”

GySgt Steve Cushman, USMC

## SAUDI ARABIA USMARCENT Concludes Native Fury 22

Native Fury 22 (NF22) has come to an end. U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Central Command (MARCENT), and the Saudi Armed Forces concluded the 8th iteration of the biennial exercise, which was hosted for the first time in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA).

Native Fury 22 executed a Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) offload operation with the support of U.S. Army’s 1st



CPL CASANDRA LAMAS, USMC



Marines with 1st Transportation Battalion, CLR-1, 1st MLG, prepare to start a convoy during Exercise Native Fury 22 at a logistics support area established in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Aug. 14. (Photo by Sgt Alize Sotelo, USMC)

Theater Sustainment Command (TSC) on the western commercial port facility at Yanbu, KSA, and at Al Bayadh on Prince Sultan Air Base. The exercise enabled increased strategic access and refined command and control, conducted Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration (RSO&I), and exercised the Trans-Arabian Network ground lines of communication.

According to MajGen Paul Rock, MARCENT commander, the exercise gave MARCENT the opportunity to practice key enabling capabilities such as MPF offload, RSO&I, and the employment of U.S. Armed Forces.

“Native Fury allows us to test capabilities that we have, including [MPF] equipment,” said Maj Anthony Reynolds, operations officer with Combat Logistics Regiment (CLR) 1, 1st Marine Logistics Group. “It allows us to make sure it’s functional, so if called to any clime or place, we can employ that ship and bring a Marine Expeditionary Force size element together.”

This year, MARCENT incorporated CLR1 from Camp Pendleton, Ca., as the headquarters element.

“This exercise shows that we can deploy a forward force from Camp Pendleton to halfway around the world, link with our host nation’s partners, do the coordination and communication piece, and successfully offload the ship,” said Col Ryan Scott, the commanding officer for CLR-1.

During the exercise, CLR-1 demonstrated rapid offload and integration of MPF and RSO&I in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility with the support of the 1st TSC, USNS *Seay* (T-AKR-302), and Blount Island Command. This allowed MARCENT to validate the process and procedures of MPF offload to support the KSA’s security.

According to Scott, the exercise also allowed MARCENT to reaffirm our commitment of regional security to the Middle East, especially within the KSA.

With the help of 1st TSC and Saudi Armed Forces, CLR-1 employed and demonstrated a 1,500-mile rapid and effective vehicle movement, a live-fire machine-gun range utilizing facilities at Al Bayadh, Prince Sultan SAU Air Base, and staging points throughout the geographic area.

“The vehicle movement and live-fire range with the Saudi Armed Forces had given us the experience to learn how they do convoy operations and engage on target,” said Sgt Leon Reynolds, a vehicle recovery operator with 1st Transportation Battalion, CLR-1. “This allowed us to build camaraderie with the U.S. Army and Saudi Armed Forces.”

Beyond training, the exercise allowed Marines and Sailors the opportunity to work with the Saudi Armed Forces, learn about their culture, and even eat a few traditional meals together.

Exercises like NF22 are vital for strengthening the United States’ partnership with KSA by refining combined tactics and enhancing interoperability. Strong partnerships help multiply the USCENTCOM’s ability to support regional security, deter malign actors, and rapidly resource partners in the region.

“This is a great opportunity for the U.S. military to work with our partners in the Middle East, specifically with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Especially building the relationship, trust, and confidence,” said Capt Jon TenBrock, the operations officer for 1st Transportation Battalion, CLR-1

Sgt Alize Sotelo, USMC

### **RATCHABURI, THAILAND U.S., Thai Military Conduct EOD Training in Kingdom of Thailand**

U.S. Marines from 9th Engineer Support Battalion (ESB), 3rd Marine Logistics Group (MLG) recently concluded a successful cycle of Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA) Level 3 Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) training with Royal Thai Military Thailand Mine Action

Center (TMAC) counterparts, in Ratchaburi and Prasat, Kingdom of Thailand, from July 11 to Aug. 5.

HMA is an ongoing program between the U.S. and Kingdom of Thailand to provide training in order to build partner capacity in safe disposal of existing landmines and explosive remnants of war. The four-week course combines classroom instruction covering advanced EOD techniques, detailed ordnance classes, and render-safe techniques, along with several range days for practical application of the skills learned on live ordnance.

During the training, the team from 3rd EOD Company successfully trained 11 students, who are now better equipped to conduct HMA actions against the adverse effects of landmines and unexploded ordnance on the civilian populace, and are able to pass their newfound knowledge on to future TMAC students.

For GySgt Jeramie Pawloski, HMA Thailand Team Leader with 3rd EOD Company, 9th ESB, the latest training cycle was a success for both the U.S. trainers and TMAC students.

“The program design develops the capabilities of TMAC, providing personnel with the technical knowledge and skills required to work in the minefields safely during demining operations. The U.S. Marine instructors that execute these



**Royal Thai Armed Forces PO1 Weerawat Suwannakorn, a Thailand Mine Action Center EOD student with Humanitarian Mine Action Unit 2, probes for booby traps during an HMA EOD Level 3 course at Ta Mor Roi Training area in Surin Province, Thailand, July 29. (Photo by Cpl Moises Rodriguez, USMC)**



CPL MOISES RODRIGUEZ, USMC

**SM1 Uthon Namsuwan, a Thailand Mine Action Center EOD student with Humanitarian Mine Action Unit 3, performs a render safe technique on an 81 mm high explosive mortar during an HMA EOD Level 3 course at Ta Mor Roi Training area in Surin Province, Thailand, July 29.**



CPL MOISES RODRIGUEZ, USMC

**SM1 Yingyong Tilarak, a Thailand Mine Action Center EOD student with Humanitarian Mine Action Unit 1, prepares an initiating system during an HMA EOD Level 3 course at Ta Mor Roi Training area in Surin Province, Thailand, July 28.**

training missions learn just as much from our Thai counterparts and develop professional and personal relationships that the U.S. Marine EOD technician can benefit from,” said Pawloski.

According to LtCol Daniel H. Cusinato, Marine Forces Pacific EOD officer and HMA Program Manager, the ongoing success of the HMA EOD program is a perfect encapsulation of the long-standing U.S. alliance with the Kingdom of Thailand.

“The opportunity to work with our Thai partners is always a valuable one, giving TMAC students real world experience, sharpening the training and knowledge of our own EOD trainers, and most importantly, strengthening the bonds among Marines and Royal Thai Armed Forces service members,” said Cusinato.

3rd MLG, based on Okinawa, is a forward deployed combat unit that serves as III Marine Expeditionary Force’s comprehensive logistics and combat service support backbone for operations throughout the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility.

1stLt Jonathan Coronel, USMC



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U.S. HISTORICAL OFFICE

Senator Michael Mansfield was elected to the House of Representatives from Montana in 1942. He later was elected to the Senate, a seat he held for 24 years.

# Bury Me a MARINE

## The Private Who Saved the Marine Corps

By GySgt Chase McGrortyHunter, USMC

**The Marine Corps found itself in another fierce battle; this time in Congress and against those in Washington who believed that the need for the Marine Corps to stand as its own service was no longer warranted.**

*Editor's note: The following article received an honorable mention in the 2022 Leatherneck Writing Contest. Major Richard A. "Rick" Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest through the Marine Corps Association Foundation.*

**A**rlington National Cemetery is home to the graves of a preponderance of the nation's most revered heroes. Touring the rolling white hills that overlook our capital city of Washington, D.C., brings you face to face with the final resting place of notable American figures including former senators, Medal of Honor recipients like John Basilone, and President John F. Kennedy. The tombstones that enshrine these larger-than-life individuals are engraved with the same achievements and titles for which our nation remembers them.

If you make your way to Section 2, Grave 4969, you will find yourself standing in front of an unassuming white headstone. This marker is not adorned with any fancy titles or awards of valor. Engraved on the headstone are seven simple lines.

MICHAEL  
JOSEPH  
MANSFIELD  
PVT  
US MARINE CORPS  
MAR 16, 1903  
OCT 5, 2001

Beneath the marble headstone lies a man whose many accomplishments in life are humbly hidden from the public. It was a life that saw him serving on active duty as a member of all three branches of the

military before his 20th birthday. It was a life that took him from the coal mines of Montana to the U.S. Congress where he served 10 years as a representative and another 24 years as a senator. His 16 years as the Senate House Majority Leader is the longest tenure in U.S. history. He went on to serve another 12 years as the U.S. ambassador to Japan.

In a life as storied as the one Michael Mansfield led, it may raise the question as to why his headstone eternalizes him only as a U.S. Marine. That was no mistake or oversight. The Marine Corps is what left a lasting impression on young Mansfield and shaped his future. In return, decades later, Mansfield returned the favor to the Marine Corps by solidifying the organization's existence during a time when that very existence was at its most contested.





COURTESY OF LYNDON B. JOHNSON LIBRARY

**Mansfield, center, the Senate Majority Leader, and Republican Sen. Everett Dirksen, left, meet with President Lyndon B. Johnson, right, in the Oval Office, June 2, 1966.**



U.S. SENATE HISTORICAL OFFICE

**Enjoying some time away from their senatorial duties, Sen. Mike Mansfield, taking on the role of umpire, joined Sen. John F. Kennedy and Sen. Henry "Scoop" Jackson for a relaxing game of baseball.**

### **Early Life**

Mansfield was born in 1903 to Irish immigrants. After the death of his mother when he was a child, he grew up under the watchful eye of his aunt and uncle before running away to seek adventure at 14 years old during the onset of World War I. Mansfield left a small town in Montana by hitching a ride from freight train to freight train, traveling the country before ultimately arriving in New York. Seeking the ultimate adventure, young Mike Mansfield made quick work of forging his birth records to make it look like he was old enough to enlist. In 1917, he embarked on a naval ship and made three voyages back and forth across the contested Atlantic waters as a Sailor in the Navy.

Having only caught the final couple of years of the war and feeling disenfranchised by the fact that most of it was spent on

**Ambassador Mike Mansfield, left, meets with President Jimmy Carter at the White House, Feb. 16, 1978. President Carter selected Mansfield for the post of U.S. ambassador to Japan in 1977.**



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

the ship, Mike's taste for adventure continued to grow. Realizing that the Navy would not provide the exploration for which he yearned, he left. Two months later, he decided to enlist in the Army. Much to his displeasure, the Army did not allow him the opportunity to travel outside of the confines of San Francisco where Mike was assigned as the keeper of a general's horse. As soon as his one year of obligated service expired, Mansfield made his way to the Marine Corps recruiting office.

As fate would have it, the Marine Corps would not only fulfill young Mansfield's yearning for travel and adventure, but it would fuel what would become a lifelong obsession with the Far East and American relations overseas. Now nearly 18 years old, he found himself on his way to the Philippines where he would spend many months before being activated to sail to Tientsin, China, to quell the rebellions occurring. Because no real combat was needed by the time U.S. forces arrived, liberty and exploration were the plans of the day during his short stay. It was during this time overseas that Mike became ever thankful for the opportunity provided by the Marine Corps to allow him to see the places that he had only dreamed of as a young boy in Montana.

Coming to the end of his two-year enlistment, Private Mansfield parted ways with the Marine Corps to head home and work the coal mines of Montana. It was here, nearly 10 years later, that Mike met his lifelong love, Maureen, who was admittedly the impetus for his decision to pursue further education. He obtained a degree in Far East history and became a professor of history and political science. Now in his mid-30s, Mansfield set his eyes on helping the state he loved by making his way into the government. Mansfield would go on to win a seat as a representative for the state of Montana. Mike Mansfield served as a representative throughout the period that saw the nation participate in World War II and the build-up to what would be the beginning of the Cold War and the spread of communism. Yet, it was during the latter part of this timeframe that the Marine Corps was in a struggle for its very survival.



COURTESY OF THE MAUREEN AND MIKE MANSFIELD FOUNDATION

**Maureen Mansfield, right, was a teacher in 1928 when she met her future husband, who was working as a copper miner at that time. She encouraged her husband to pursue his education and worked to support him while he was in college. She later suggested that he enter politics and worked with him on the campaign trail.**

### **Contested Waters**

As a result of the flag raising on the summit of Mount Suribachi on the island of Iwo Jima, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal stated, "The raising of that flag ... means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years." Only a few years after that famous quote, the Marine Corps found itself in another fierce battle; this time in Congress and against those in Washington who believed that the need for the Marine Corps to stand as its own service was no

longer warranted. This battle was made more difficult following the National Security Act of 1947 which saw the creation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff which included representation by the heads of the Army, the Air Force, and Navy, but none from the Marine Corps.

An effort led in part by Army senior leaders, as well as some members of Congress sought to diminish the capabilities and role that the Marine Corps would play in a future campaign. They believed there



**Michael Joseph Mansfield (above), who had a 60-year storied career in politics, wanted to be remembered not for that, but for his service as a Marine. GySgt Chase McGroartyHunter (left) visits the grave of Mansfield after writing about the senator's legacy.**

COURTESY OF CHASE MCGROARTYHUNTER, USMC

COURTESY OF GREAT FALLS TRIBUNE

was no room for the Marine Corps' amphibious landing capabilities in the coming age of nuclear conflict. The sentiment that revolved around the opposition to the equality of the Marine Corps among other branches at the time is best captured in President Truman's private letter to Representative McDonough after he engaged the President about authorizing the Commandant a seat on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

President Truman responded by writing, "The Marine Corps is the Navy's police force and as long as I am President, that is what it will remain. They have a propaganda machine that is almost equal to Stalin's." With opposition as strong as that, few had the voice and respect on Capitol Hill to rally in support of the Marine Corps.

Exactly 30 years removed from his service as a Marine, Mansfield fought for the only organization that had made good on its promises to him as a young man. Having seen the Marine Corps answer the call to respond immediately to the crisis

in Korea that became the Korean War, Mansfield and others decided it was due time to solidify the permanence of the Marine Corps among our nation's armed forces. The Douglas-Mansfield Act, also dubbed "The Marine Corps Bill," sought to amend the National Security Act of 1947 by establishing that the Marine Corps would stand as its own branch of service, maintain a minimum of three combat divisions and three airwings, and have representation on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The tenacity displayed by Mansfield to fight on behalf of the Marine Corps over the two months in which the bill was being debated convinced many members to back the bill. Ultimately, the bill passed through both houses of Congress with almost unanimous support, a testament to its creators' lobbying. On June 28th, 1952, nearly two years after penning his letter which showed his disdain for the Marine Corps, President Truman signed Public Law 416, and a new era for the Marine Corps began.

### A Lasting Legacy

From that date, the responsibility was again on the Marine Corps to fulfill its end of the bargain and make good on the opportunity to play its role in the nation's defense. With that renewal of faith, the Marine Corps further cemented its place in history through its role in conflicts such as Vietnam, Somalia, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Iraq, and many more.

In a world where loyalty is a fleeting trait, Michael Mansfield personified it flawlessly to those he served from his positions among the varying ranks of the U.S. government. His pride as a Marine was displayed every day that he entered the halls of Congress for nearly 35 years by wearing the same small lapel pin of an eagle, globe and anchor. Upon his death, his devotion was ultimately cemented when amongst his titles as a soldier, Sailor, congressman, senator, and ambassador, he chose to be buried as a Marine.

*Authors bio: GySgt McGroartyHunter is a cyber network chief by trade and is currently serving as a faculty advisor at the Staff Non-Commissioned Officers Academy aboard MCB Quantico. Most recently before arriving at the academy he served with 1st Battalion, 4th Marines where he deployed twice in support of the 31st and 15th MEU.*

White Haven, Pa.



COURTESY OF PAUL MENDOFIK

## Iwo Jima Vet Joins Marines, Scouts During Flag Day Ceremony

Members of Marine Corps League Detachment 1039, VFW Post 6615 and Boy Scouts of America Troop 63 came together to participate in a Flag Day ceremony in their hometown of White Haven, Pa., June 14. Among the proud attendees was a World War II veteran, Staff Sergeant Edward O'Donnell, pictured standing fourth from right, who served with the 3rd Marine Division during the Battle of Iwo Jima. Sadly, the battle claimed the life of his

brother, Tommy. O'Donnell later was recalled during the Korean War. He also served as a drill instructor at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C.

"He is very active with the league and truly gung-ho," detachment commandant Paul Mendofik said of O'Donnell.

Submitted by Paul Mendofik

Window Rock, Ariz.



LCPL LESLIE ALCARAZ, USMC

## Marines Celebrate the 80th Anniversary of Navajo Code Talkers

The Marine Corps recently celebrated the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Navajo Code Talkers and the vital role they played in the Pacific island hopping campaign of World War II.

On Sunday, Aug. 14, hundreds gathered to mark National Navajo Code Talkers Day with the groundbreaking of the Navajo Code Talker Museum near Window Rock, Ariz., the Navajo Nation's capital.

Three remaining Code Talkers, Thomas H. Begay, John Kinsel Sr. and Peter MacDonald Sr., were honored at a ceremony.

USMC

## Syracuse, N.Y.

### Marine Corps League Detachment Raises Funds at Syracuse Nationals

Marines from MCL Detachment 224, Greater Syracuse, attended the Syracuse Nationals Car Show during the weekend of July 15-17. The detachment sets up their booth at the car show each year, raising funds to be redistributed around the local area. A crew of at least six Marines volunteered their time to staff the event each day.

They raised \$3,200 by the end of the weekend. \$500 of the funds raised were donated to the Lafayette Optmists Club with smaller amounts donated to other charities and individuals in need.

The Nationals is the largest car show in the Northeast, and one of two annual events that Detachment 224 attends each year to raise money.

Submitted by Bob Brown



GREGG ORDON

## Lenhartsville, Pa.



ADAM KRICK

### Goons Up Hosts 4th Annual Machine Gun Shoot

Goons Up, a Marine veteran-owned business, hosted their 4th annual machine gun shoot on Aug. 27. Adam Krick, the owner and operator of Goons Up, hosts the event each year on his parents' property in Pennsylvania, providing veterans the opportunity to fire some of the same weapons they carried in combat. A fellow Marine veteran, Aaron Demko of BeltFeds.Com, supplies the machine guns each year.

Each year, anywhere from 25 to more than 100 veterans of the

Global War on Terrorism have attended. This year, Krick targeted Vietnam veterans when planning the shoot, bringing M60s into the mix. Five Vietnam veterans participated, along with several other recent era veterans. Each had the opportunity to get back on their guns, running ammo belts through them just as they did 50 years ago.

Submitted by Adam Krick

**“Corps Connections” highlights the places and events through which active-duty and veteran Marines connect with one another, honor the traditions of the Corps and recognize the achievements of their fellow leathernecks. We welcome submissions of photos from events like the ones featured here. Send them to: *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to [leatherneck@mca-marines.org](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org). Submission does not guarantee publication, and we cannot guarantee the return of photos.** 📷

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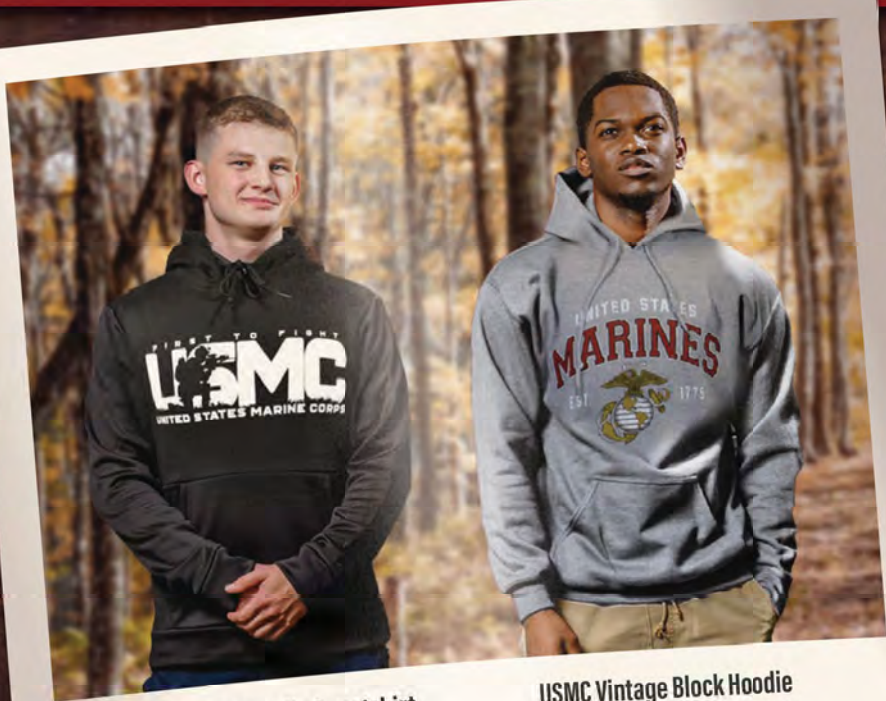
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# Leatherneck Laffs



"Gunny, the toys are for the tots!"



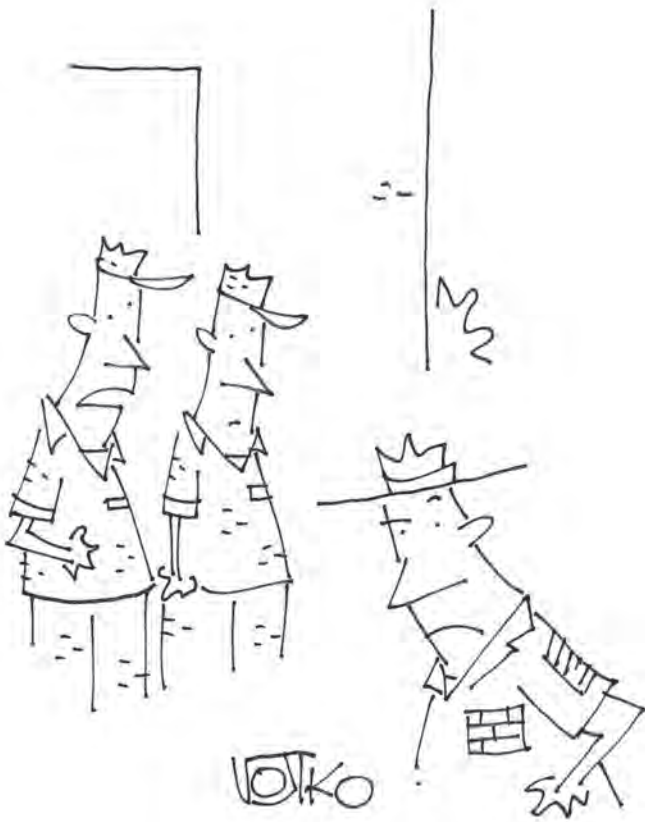
"They're tougher than sandbags ... fruit cakes!"



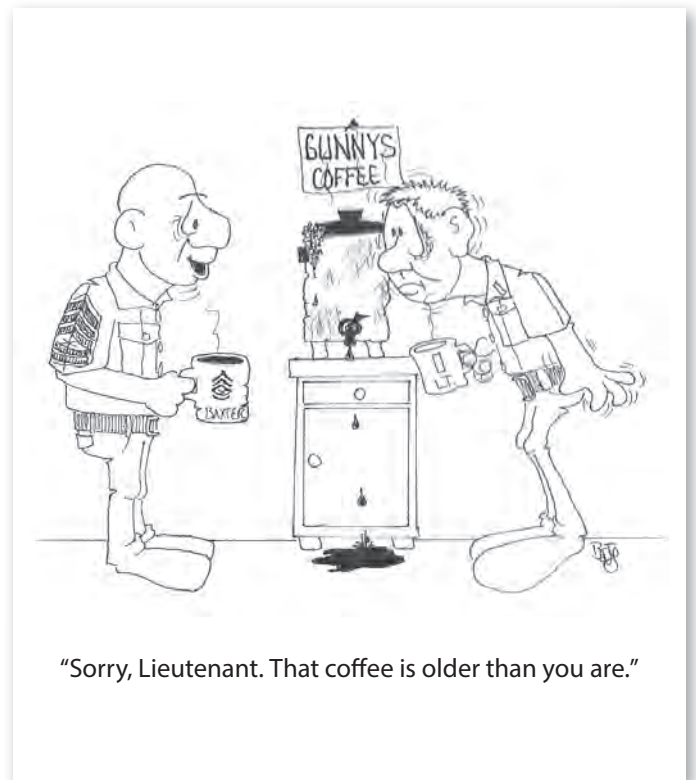
"That was the chief. He wants to see me!  
Find out how to get to E-ring, then take me there."



"The General is writing a blog on the  
military's over-dependence on computers."



"He's a Marine sergeant.  
There's no such thing as 'inside voice.' "



"Sorry, Lieutenant. That coffee is older than you are."



"Simply put, an allotment is where you keep a minimum  
amount of your pay and send a lot of it home."



"I just realized I've forgotten my first name."

# Hue Hospital

## Feb. 5, 1968

By Jon Hull

*Editor's note: The following excerpt of the recently published book, "Needs of the Corps—The Ron Christmas Story," the biography of Lieutenant General George R. "Ron" Christmas, USMC (Ret), describes his company's fight during the battle for Hue City.*

**T**he Hue Hospital was the scene of the following day's fight and main objective for 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines. Prior to moving on the hospital, the University Library and Cercle Sportif Club were secured with relative ease by 9 a.m. Each company was assigned a section of the hospital to secure by mutually supporting attacks.

The fight was long and intense, but it was fortunate the Marines had been warned that Viet Cong (VC) units occupied the hospital and might be posing as patients. They were!

In the hours that followed, more than one Marine was fired upon by a patient, but they were ready for such a surprise except for one Marine who

encountered a person wearing a black habit; he thought he was meeting a nun. He could have not been more wrong. Fortunately, the "nun's" pistol misfired, and the Marine's life was spared. The "nun" was soon a dead Viet Cong soldier. During the course of the hospital attack, "Rock Mat 6," Cheatham's call sign, [LtCol Earnest C. Cheatham, commanding officer of 2/5] pressured Capt Christmas to initiate a movement, one he was not quite ready to make. In response to his radio operator who reported Cheatham's guidance, in the heat of the moment, Christmas looked at the radio operator and told him to, "Tell the old man to go screw himself!"

"Fox" Company was attacking the left side of the hospital with Hotel and Golf Companies attacking on the right. Finally initiating the attack with a breaching blast, Hotel Co's 1st Platoon, led by Lieutenant Leo Myers, poured through the gap into the heart of the hospital courtyard. The assault had been so abrupt and speedy, the



During the Battle of Hue City, Navy corpsman, D.R. Howe, treats the wounds of PFC D.A. Crum of Co H, 2nd Bn, 5th Marine Regiment.

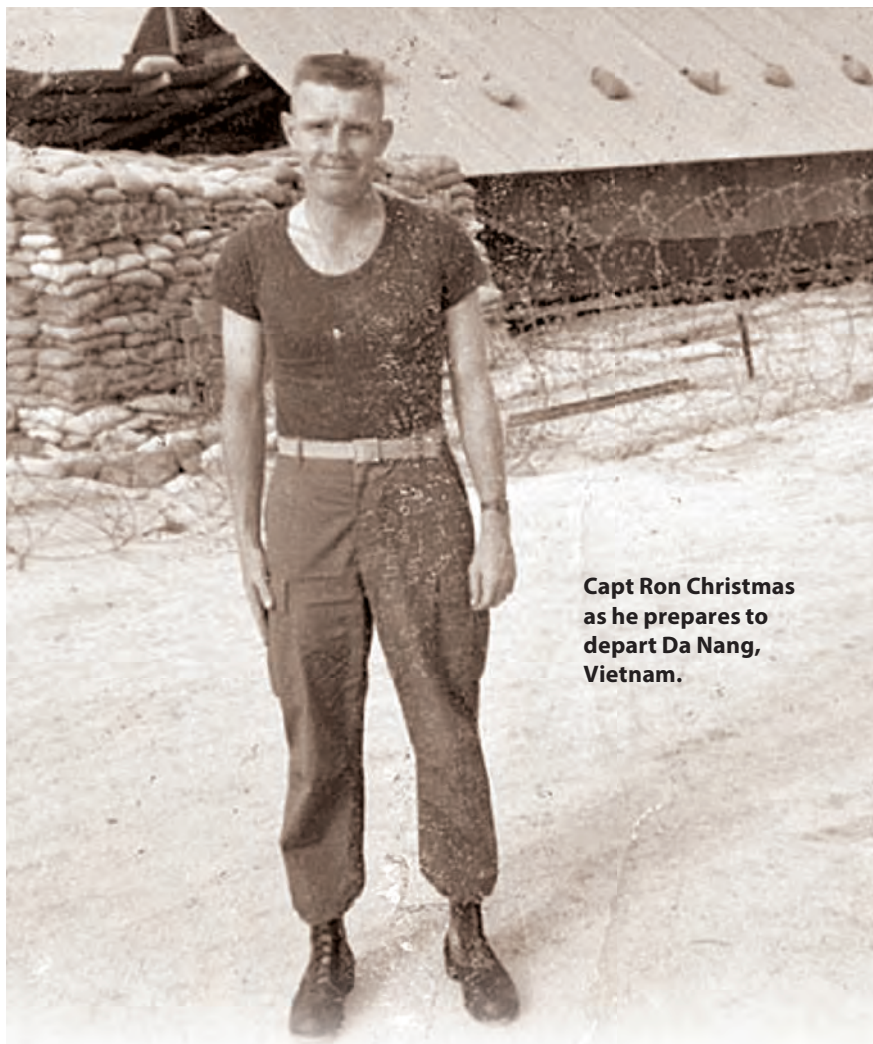
SGT WILLIAM F. DICKMAN

platoon had overrun enemy defensive positions. As stunned enemy soldiers regained their senses, they began to engage the platoon from the rear. The platoon, already facing determined Communists at their front positioned in the hospital, was now receiving accurate and deadly fire from nearly 360 degrees. Recognizing the attack was stalling, Christmas desperately sought a solution. The other platoons of Hotel Co were not in a position, nor had the line of sight, to assist the trapped Marines of 1st Plt. Aggressively committing them into the fray might only trap additional Marines in the center of this chaos.

Christmas re-positioned the other two platoons and seized a corner building across the block. From the upper story floors of the seized building, he attempted to relieve the hell 1st Plt found itself in. Despite the supporting platoons' unrelenting engagement, the volume of enemy fire, which included small arms, automatic weapons, and B-40 rockets, only grew more intense. Realizing the seriousness of the situation and the urgent need to sustain the momentum of the attack, Christmas leaped up and raced dozens of meters through the hurricane of fire to the entrapped lead platoon. Ignoring the enemy fire, he calmly, yet forcefully, urged the Marines forward. Looking back, to his amazement, he saw a Marine tank coming down the road toward them, one he had requested prior to the initiation of the attack.

Shouting to the frantically fighting platoon to hang tough, help was on the way, Christmas again sprang up and raced across the nightmare of enemy fire. He issued a quick order to his other two platoons to attack, and then ran across 75 yards of open terrain, ignoring automatic weapons fire, hand grenades and satchel charges, to reach the tank. Finding the phone located on the back of the tank used to communicate with the crew not to be functioning, he climbed on top of the tank, which was quickly becoming a magnet for every weapon system the Communists had to throw at it. Fearlessly he directed the tank crew in their movement and specific engagements against the mutually supporting enemy bunkers, fighting holes, and trench lines they faced, always conscious of avoiding the besieged 1st Platoon Marines.

In addition to the intense volume of small arms striking off the tank and



**Capt Ron Christmas as he prepares to depart Da Nang, Vietnam.**

COURTESY OF LTGEN RON CHRISTMAS

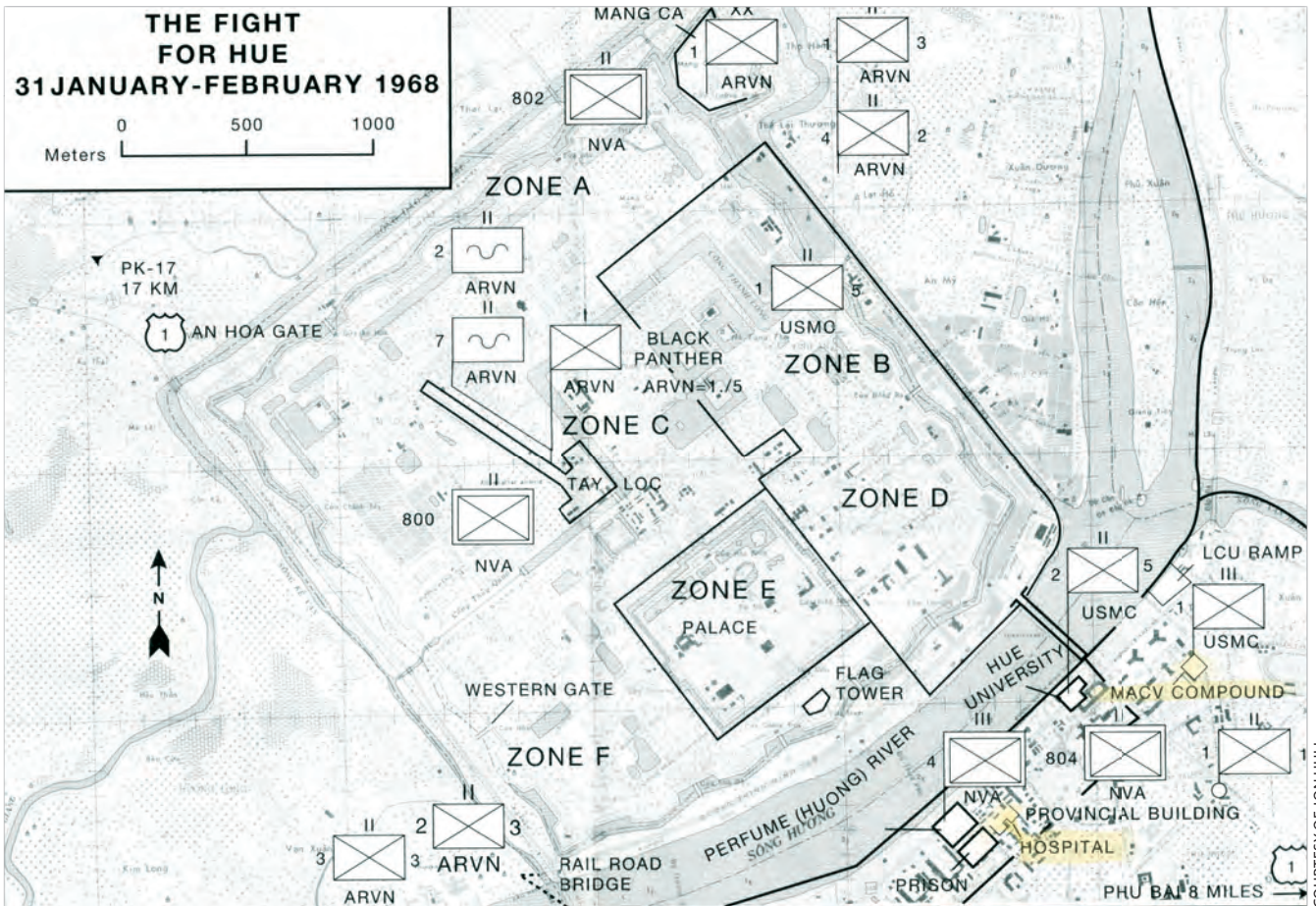
around Christmas, the tank was also struck by two B-40 rockets, which knocked Christmas to the tank's deck. Rapidly regaining his senses and position on the tank, he continued the frantic attack. Recognizing the enemy's fire had diminished and Hotel Co could gain the tactical advantage, he jumped from the tank, shouted to the other two platoons to follow him, and personally led Hotel Co in a destructive assault on the enemy positions, freeing 1st Plt to rejoin the attack. Christmas and his Marines aggressively cleared each room of the portion of the hospital they were assigned. By 6:30 p.m., 2/5 would declare the hospital complex secure.

Christmas' leadership, bold initiative, and courageous actions, as well as a very timely tank arriving on the scene, helped to provide the impetus that inspired Hotel Co forward against all odds of success. This hallmark act, as well as countless others during the battle for Hue, would lead to Christmas being recommended for the Navy Cross.



USMC

**LtCol Ernie Cheatham commanded 2/5 during the Battle of Hue City. He was an experienced Marine, but even he had not previously encountered the fierce urban warfare that Marines encountered in Hue City.**



### In the Heat of Battle

Later that evening after things had cooled a bit and the hospital was in hand, Christmas was talking with his radio operators. Sitting up on the second deck of a house, Christmas mentioned in the heat of the earlier fight, "I said some things back there..." Before he could complete the sentence, the radio operator replied, "Yes, Sir. Rock Mat 6 was on the other end, and I told him exactly what you had said." Christmas was a bit shocked when he realized what had happened; he had essentially told Cheatham to "Go screw himself!"

Following the capture of the hospital and the fall of night, as had been the routine, the company commanders would meet with Cheatham. On this occasion, after his response had been radioed to Cheatham earlier in the day, Christmas grabbed one of the best bottles of cognac Hotel Company had liberated earlier in the fight. The meeting was held in a university classroom, and Christmas entered like a concerned student. Walking forward with his head down, he placed the bottle of liquor on



**Christmas with his radioman, "Tommy" Thompkins, and a toy M16 that was found by Christmas' Marines. (Photo courtesy of LtGen Ron Christmas)**

the table where Cheatham sat, much like a child delivers a shiny red apple to the teacher. It was an offering of apology, and with that, he took his seat for the nightly mind melding session.

Cheatham simply smiled, accepted the bottle, and made no mention of the radio transmission made earlier in the day.

### **Communist Flag Down, Stars and Stripes Up**

The briefing that night was held in Cheatham's hasty battalion command post in the University Complex located blocks away from the provincial capitol and the city jail. Both facilities represented important political icons, but, more importantly for 2/5, they were also vital tactical objectives. A huge Viet Cong flag had been flying from the flagpole in front of the capitol since Jan. 31, and the sight of it was annoying to the Marines. Cheatham issued the order for the following day's attack on the provincial capitol building, making it perfectly clear, "It will be an eventful day for us." Christmas's only thought was it would be good to see that damn flag come down.

Christmas knew the building complex was defended as a strong point, and the attack would be completely canalized because of the nature of the buildings, streets, and alleys from which they would have to launch the assault. His Marines would be forced to attack into a narrowing exposed route. To seize the capitol building, the lead elements would first have to cover an open street and then a 40- to 50-meter-wide open courtyard. Christmas decided to empty all the tear gas from the E-8 launchers during the assault on the enemy forces to reduce casualties. He had no idea, despite what Hotel Co had already encountered, how difficult and dirty the next several hours of fighting would be. After five hours of raging battle, the company still had not secured a foothold on the provincial capitol. Hotel Co tried to dislodge the enemy early in the day with CS but had failed. Although the fire coming from the building had lessened, a heavy volume of enemy automatic weapons and rocket fire was still coming from buildings down the street. The situation was such all supporting arms 2/5 could muster were now brought to bear on the structure. Captain Micheal Downs of Fox Co used mortars to level structures located just

yards away, literally across the street from the Marines' firing point.

Surveying the scene and situation, Christmas realized the time had come for Hotel Co to launch an all-out attack. The enemy fire slackened, and the courtyard was covered with dead NVA soldiers. Under the cover of CS and smoke, Christmas ordered 1st Platoon to lead the attack.

Minutes later, reaching for the radio to call the "Old Man," Christmas calmly reported they had the building and were going to raise the American flag. Cheatham replied they were not authorized to fly the United States flag, but went on to say, "Go ahead and run it up before anyone tells us not to. We are doing the fighting and we might as well let our guys get the credit. I want those NVA guys across the river to see this."

Turning to Gunnery Sergeant Thomas surrounded by the very grim men of the Hotel Company command group,



USMC

**LtGen George R. "Ron" Christmas served 34 years in the Marine Corps, retiring in 1996.**



The President of the United States of America takes pleasure in presenting the Navy Cross to  
**CAPTAIN GEORGE R. CHRISTMAS**  
**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

for extraordinary heroism while serving as the Commanding Officer of Company H, Second Battalion, Fifth Marines, First Marine Division (Reinforced), Fleet Marine Force, in connection with operations against the enemy in the Republic of Vietnam. On the afternoon of 5 February 1968 during Operation HUE CITY, Company H was attacking a complex of buildings known to be an enemy strong point consisting of mutually supporting bunkers, fighting holes, and trench lines. During the ensuing fire fight, two platoons seized the corner building of a city block, but intense hostile small-arms, automatic weapons, and B-40 rocket fire temporarily halted the advance. Realizing the seriousness of the situation and the urgent need to sustain the momentum of the attack, Captain Christmas, undaunted by the heavy volume of enemy fire, completely disregarded his own safety as he moved across thirty-five meters of open area to join the lead element and assess the situation. Returning across the fire-swept area, he rejoined the remaining platoon, issued an attack order, and then ran seventy meters across open terrain, ignoring automatic weapons fire, hand grenades, and satchel charges striking around him to reach a tank he had requested. Braving enemy fire and two B-40 rockets that hit the tank, he fearlessly stood atop the vehicle to direct accurate fire against the hostile positions until the intensity of enemy fire diminished. Immediately realizing the tactical advantage, he jumped from the tank, and directed his company in an aggressive assault on the hostile positions, personally leading his men in room-to-room fighting until the building complex was secured. In a large measure due to his bold initiative and courageous actions, he provided the impetus which inspired his men to aggressive action and enabled them to successfully accomplish the mission. By his dynamic leadership, unfaltering determination and selfless devotion to duty in the face of extreme personal danger, Captain Christmas upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.

**After a fierce fight,  
Christmas' Marines lowered the  
Viet Cong flag in Thua Thien  
and replaced it with the  
Stars and Stripes.**



COURTESY OF LTGEN RON CHRISTMAS

Christmas told them, “We have looked at the damn flag all day, and now we are going to take it down. Let’s go!”

At 4:03 p.m. on that costly day, despite the American practice calling for only raising South Vietnamese flags, Privates First Class Alan McDonald and Walter Kalzmarek, along with Gunnery Sergeant Thomas and Lieutenant Leo Myers, eagerly accomplished the task, yanking down the red and blue flag from the capitol of Thua Thien Province. With machine-gun fire still splattering up and down the nearby blood smeared streets, the Stars and Stripes reached the top of the pole. Looking like a statue with his head frozen back staring up at the top of the flagpole, the gunny burst into tears as Marines in the building and courtyard began to cheer. Christmas joined their cheers, moved deeply by the experience with his eyes glassed with tears. In a matter of seconds, gun fire interrupted the serene moment as six nearby enemy soldiers were eliminated.

A CBS correspondent accompanying Hotel Co reported, “There was no bugler and most of the Marines were too busy to salute, but not often is a flag so proudly raised.” Further he commented, “This assault is being won on the basis of sheer courage, and there is no shortage of that in the Marines.”



SGT WILLIAM DICKMAN, USMC





USS *Hue City* (CG-66) underway sometime in 1991. The *Ticonderoga*-class guided missile cruiser is the first ship to be named after a Vietnam War battle.

USN

Within minutes the MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] staff contacted the 5th Marines regimental staff with a message, advising them that an American flag had been observed flying in the vicinity of the capitol and would have to come down. Cheatham ultimately relayed the message to Christmas in simply an informational manner. The day's price had been too high, and Christmas silently vowed the flag would remain in place for as long as the Marines occupied the area. Until the last Marine left the capitol, Christmas intended to keep it flying.

Before darkness fell, an Army major and Marine major from MACV made the dangerous trek to the capital. They arrived to set the Marines straight on the existing policy regarding American flags. Finding the officer in charge, the majors confronted Capt Christmas with the MACV message—the flag must come down.

As the three officers faced off, several Hotel Co Marines began to gather around. The group seemed oblivious

to the enemy small arms fire and occasional rocket streaking through the courtyard. With the greatest constraint, and void of emotion, Christmas advised the majors that neither he nor any Marine present had any intention of bringing the flag down. He went on to let them know they were welcomed to do so themselves adding, “But there is no way I can ensure your personal safety if you chose to do so.”

Looking at the group of battered Marines surrounding them, ragged and torn, each with the blood of a comrade, if not their own, staining their fatigues, men who had just survived what would be the one of the highest casualty producing days for a single unit during the course of the entire Vietnam War, the majors thought better. They gladly accepted Christmas's position that the flag should fly until the Marines left the capitol complex, and then quickly departed for the safety of the MACV compound before full darkness fell.

Gunnery Sergeant Thomas continued to carry the flag throughout the battle

for Hue, taking it with him when he returned home months later. On Sept. 14, 1991, at the commissioning ceremony for USS *Hue City* in Mayport, Fla., he presented the flag to the Navy crew. The flag was raised on the ship that day by McDonald and Kalzmarek, the same two young Marines who had pulled it up the lanyard in Hue City 23 years before.

The flag remains on display on the ship's quarterdeck to this day.

*Author's bio: Jon Hull is a former engineer officer who retired as a colonel in 2007. He continues to serve the Marine Corps as Deputy Director, Logistic Combat Element, Capabilities Development Directorate, Combat Development and Integration.*

*Capt Hull served as LtGen Christmas' aide in the mid-1990s when the general was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Col Hull's book, "Needs of the Corps: The Ron Christmas Story" can be found at Amazon.com*

## MLB Hall of Famer Memorialized at National Museum of the Marine Corps

Luis R. Clemente joined staff from the National Museum of the Marine Corps in a brick-laying ceremony to commemorate his father, Roberto Clemente Walker, at the Semper Fidelis Memorial Park in Triangle, Va., on Sept. 7.

“This is very special to me because of all the accolades that Dad accomplished. He was extremely proud of being a Marine,” Luis Clemente said. “I was here with Mom when he was inducted into the Marine Sports Hall of Fame and to now have him here, officially with his fellow Marines, is something that he would be very happy about and very proud of.”

Roberto Clemente Walker (known professionally as Roberto Clemente) was a Major League Baseball (MLB) player who also served in the Marine Corps Reserve. Aside from being an MLB Hall of Famer, Clemente spent much of his time during the off-season involved in charity work.

“Dad was a man who was very conscious of how the blessings he received should be shared to make a difference and impact in other lives,” said Luis Clemente, “He always became a voice for those who didn’t have a voice and represented those who don’t have everything in life.”

The ceremony was held to memorialize

Clemente’s legacy as a Marine and as a humanitarian. The brick was placed in honor of the 50th anniversary of Roberto Clemente’s 3,000th hit on Sept. 30, 1972, and his untimely death a few months later that same year.

The Marine Corps Heritage Foundation’s Commemorative Brick Program serves to honor all Marines, past and present, by permanently including them as a part of Marine Corps history. The engraved bricks line the pathways of the Semper Fidelis Memorial Park that overlooks the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

Roberto Clemente started his baseball career in Puerto Rico before moving to the minor leagues; he made it to the major leagues in 1955. He played for the Pittsburgh Pirates until his death in 1972 and was named an All-Star and National League MVP. Clemente enlisted in the United States Marine Corps Reserve in 1958 and served during the off seasons through 1964.

“Roberto Clemente was a great athlete to be sure, but more than that he was a great human being,” said Sara Hogan, senior development manager, Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

Clemente died in a plane crash on Dec. 31, 1972. The aircraft, en route to Nicaragua following a devastating earthquake there, was loaded with much-needed emergency

supplies. Clemente was posthumously inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1973 and the Marine Corps Sports Hall of Fame in 2003.

“He lived out the very values the Marine Corps espouses ... the values everyone expects from a U.S. Marine ... honor, courage, commitment, service and sacrifice,” said Hogan.

LCpl Kayla LeClaire, USMC

## Recruiting Station Fort Worth Marines Recognized for Heroism

The Marines of Recruiting Station Fort Worth held an awards ceremony at Veterans Park in Arlington, Texas, on Aug. 18 to recognize acts of heroism by Gunnery Sergeant Jamie Self, Staff Sergeant Dylan Greene, and SSgt Dalmon Moseley, Marine recruiters at Recruiting Substation Arlington. Their decisiveness and initiative are credited with saving the life of a gunshot victim on Feb. 5.

The incident occurred at a shopping center outside their office. The Marines responded immediately. Finding two severely injured civilians, the three recruiters took control of the scene and guarded a firearm that was found nearby. Moseley retrieved a trauma kit from the recruiting station and helped to stabilize one of the victims. The Marines also assisted police by identifying the gunman to them when they arrived.



Right: Sara Hogan, Senior Development Manager, Marine Corps Heritage Foundation, left, joins Luis R. Clemente in a brick-laying ceremony at the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., Sept. 7, 2022, commemorating Luis’ father, Roberto Clemente, Major League Baseball Hall of Famer and Marine. (Photos by LCpl Kayla LeClaire, USMC)





ISTITTYLER MASCHAL, USMC

**SSgt Dylan Greene, left, SSgt Dalmon Moseley, center, and GySgt Jamie Self, right, with Recruiting Substation Arlington, were each presented with a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal on Aug. 18, for saving the life of a man wounded in a shooting in Arlington, Texas, Feb. 5.**

“Self, Greene and Moseley had positive control of the scene for over five minutes; from the time that the 911 call was made, to the time that Arlington Police Department arrived to secure the scene. These individuals ensured that no one got near the weapon and that the suspect did not leave; this was all under control due to their presence,” said Sgt Jonathan Sosa of the Arlington Police Department.

According to statements released by the victim’s mother, EMS and emergency room staff, the aid provided by the Marines, prior to EMS arrival, was crucial to stabilizing the patient’s injuries. Due to the quick medical response of the Marines, the patient was able to undergo surgery immediately upon arriving to the hospital.

“If it wasn’t for SSgt Green, GySgt Self, and SSgt Moseley, my son would not be here today,” said the victim’s mother.

When asked about their thoughts that day, all three Marines referred to the confidence and skills acquired throughout their Marine Corps careers.

“If I hadn’t received the training I’ve experienced throughout my career, I would have been a bystander like everyone else. I can’t be that guy that just stands by when I know that I have the means and the capability to help,” said Greene.

Each Marine received the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal for their actions.

2ndLt Tyler Maschal, USMC

### **Husband and Wife Take Command Of Squadrons on the Same Day**

Midshipman Michael O’Brien watched the ball sail through the air before swishing perfectly into the net on the U.S. Naval Academy basketball court. He fell in love. Courtney Davidson made shot after shot. The Hanover, Pa., native was earning her legacy as the all-time highest scorer for the Naval Academy women’s basketball team.

Almost 20 years later, Lieutenant Colonel Michael O’Brien and LtCol Courtney O’Brien each took command of their own squadrons within 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing on the same day with 17 years of marriage under their belts and two children by their side.

LtCol Courtney “Britney” O’Brien took the helm as commanding officer of Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron (VMGR) 352, Marine Aircraft Group 11. A short jog down the flightline, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 314 is now commanded by her husband, LtCol Michael “Snooki” O’Brien.

The two Marine leaders have celebrated many successes throughout their careers, both personally and professionally. Courtney O’Brien has served in multiple combat deployments, including Operation Enduring Freedom. Her long list of accomplishments includes her roles in doctrine development, becoming a Weapons and Tactics Instructor, serving as a liaison to NATO, and becoming the first female officer to command VMGR-352.

“I am so happy to be back in this environment,” said Courtney O’Brien during her change of command ceremony. “This is what it is all about.”

Her passion is leading Marines and flying aircraft—big aircraft. In fact, that’s why she pilots the KC-130J Super Hercules.

“At first, I chose this platform because I wanted to fly the biggest thing the Marine Corps had,” she said. “Within this platform, there are always ways to improve, and the teamwork that comes from a junior Marine to a master gunnery sergeant and then up to me is an aspect I really enjoy being a part of.”

Down the flightline, Michael O’Brien leads the Marine Corps’ first operational F-35C Lightning II squadron. Michael O’Brien’s assumption of command marks



LCPL COURTNEYA. ROBERTSON, USMC

**LtCol Courtney "Britney" O'Brien, left, and LtCol Michael "Snooki" O'Brien pose for a photo in front of a KC-130J Super Hercules and F-35C Lightning II jets on Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Sept. 13. The two married Marines took command of their squadrons on the same day on Sept. 9.**

another achievement in a high-speed career.

He has served in two combat deployments, graduated from the U.S. Navy Strike Fighter Tactics Instructor program (TOPGUN), and became an F-35C Lightning II pilot before becoming an instructor. After taking command, he summed up his motivations with one word: "winning."

"I am a jet pilot because I like to win," said Michael, a native of Philadelphia, Pa. "I am extremely competitive. Jet pilots are aggressive and hyper-focused. When I am up there in the air, the only thing my team and I have to think about is winning. Everything else is a dynamic mental aspect of communicating with the other pilots in the most accurate way without talking."

The O'Briens reflected on their different experiences and preferences. Michael explained that his wife is always there to remind him of the rules and regulations, while she adds that he supports her by encouraging her to be more extroverted and assertive with communication.

"While I got all my aggressiveness out of me on the basketball court, he still has plenty to give out in the air," Courtney said before laughing.

The O'Briens said their different per-

sonalities complement their relationship. The couple credits each other for their professional successes and careers, as well as the strength of their 17-year marriage. Achieving a balance between two active-duty careers and family can be challenging. However, Courtney O'Brien said there is a way, and it starts with leadership.

"I think we, as leadership, don't do a good enough job prioritizing family," she said. "I realized while going through it all, there is always a way to get things done and to still have a flexible approach. And that includes leadership. They need to be flexible and support their Marines, just as a Marine needs to be flexible to do his or her job."

The couple admits to having ups and downs in their relationship as they worked to find balance in supporting each other and their careers. Operational commitments and long work hours added a level of stress. However, the couple learned that communication was key.

"Back before we had our communication down, one of our biggest friction points was figuring out whose job took priority," Michael O'Brien said. "When we realized the importance of communication, it wasn't a big fight. It's more of communicating whose mission takes precedence and

what makes most sense for the family and the job."

The two agreed that without both putting effort into "making it work," their family would have been greatly lacking the consistency and stability it needs. They explained that programs for families across military base, along with the ability to overcome and adapt to adversity immensely helped them.

"Contrary to popular belief, the Marine Corps does not want cookie cutter," Michael O'Brien said. "If something needs to get done, go outside the box and get it done. The Marine Corps wants you to contribute your individual talents and ideas, especially if it helps you succeed."

Courtney O'Brien added, "Your success is the Marine Corps' success."

The O'Briens explained that being transparent with family and leadership is key to a successful marriage and career in the Marine Corps. With support from fellow Marines, leadership, loved ones, and the institutional support at units and installations, being a high-performing Marine and a husband, wife, mother, or father is within reach.

LCpl Courtney Robertson, USMC





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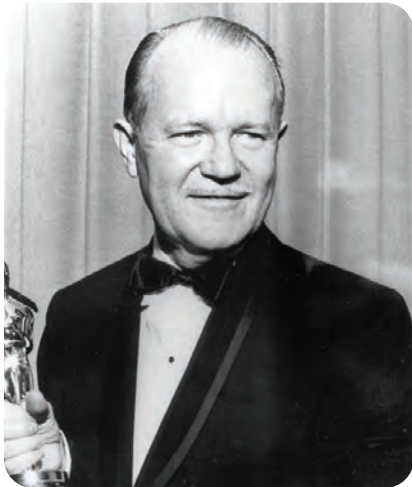
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# Toys for Tots:

## 75 Years of Delivering Joy to Children



COURTESY OF TOYS FOR TOTS

William L. Hendricks was a major in the Marine Corps Reserve when he established Toys for Tots in 1947. Hendricks worked in the motion picture industry, and he was presented with an Honorary Oscar for his patriotism after writing and producing the Marine Corps documentary, "A Force in Readiness," in 1961.

By Jennifer Castro

**T**oys for Tots was founded in 1947 by Marine Corps Reserve officer Major William "Bill" L. Hendricks when his wife, Diane, wanted to donate dolls to a charity that would distribute the toys to children in need. Unable to find such an organization, Diane convinced her husband to create one. Hendricks, who was a public relations director for Warner Brothers Studios, called not only on his celebrity friends to help, he also looked to fellow Marine reservists to get the job done. The project was a huge success: Hendricks' reserve unit in Los Angeles, Calif., collected and distributed 5,000 toys that year.



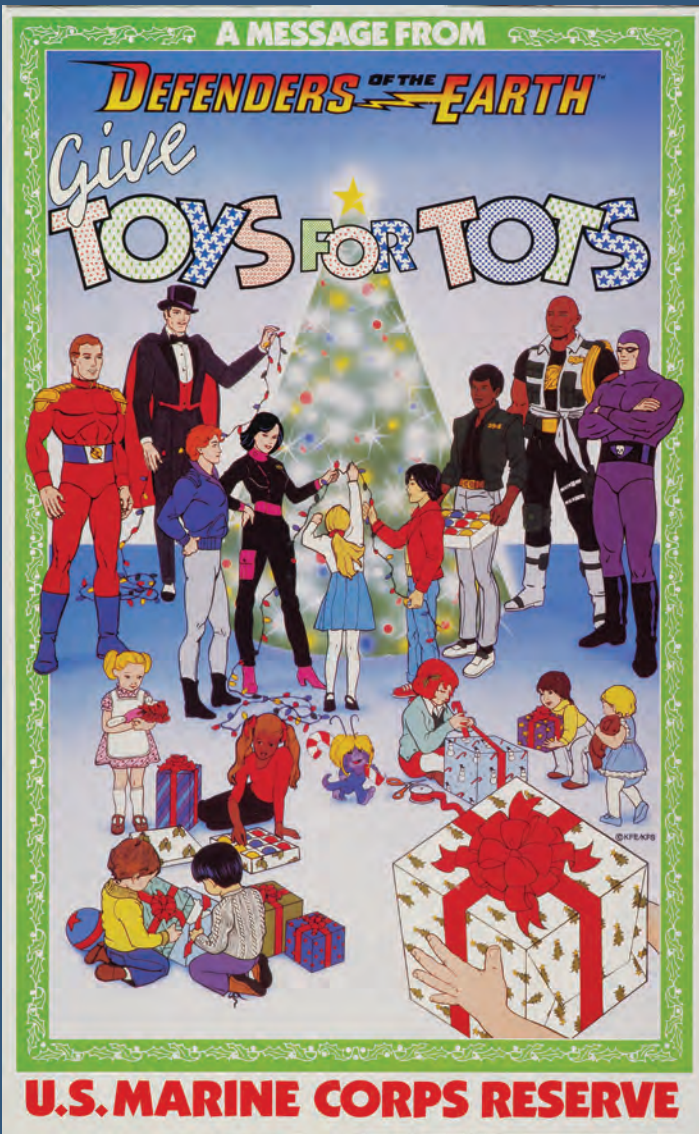
Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots event, circa 1951

The program was officially adopted by the Marine Corps in 1948 and went nationwide almost immediately. Today it is recognized as an official activity of the Marine Corps and is part of the official mission of the Marine Corps Reserve. For the past 75 years, the Toys for Tots program along with the

U.S. Marine Corps Reserve have led a campaign to collect new and unwrapped toys, providing millions of gifts annually to underprivileged children during the holiday season.

Perhaps the most familiar part of the campaign is the festive seasonal posters advertising the toy drive.

FROM THE ANTHONY RESTIVO COLLECTION (COLL/5574) AT THE MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION OFFICIAL USMC PHOTOGRAPH



1986, produced by the Hearst Corporation



1977, Toys For Tots 30th Anniversary

WARNER BROS. INC. ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS



Date Unknown



1975, by Dong Kingman



1994, by Keith McConnell

COURTESY OF KEITH MCCONNELL

# TOYS FOR TOTS



1979, by Keith McConnell

Of the many artists responsible for creating iconic imagery for Toys for Tots, Marine Corps combat artist Keith McConnell is of exceptional note. He designed nine posters for Toys for Tots including for the 35th, 50th, and 60th anniversaries. McConnell served as a combat artist during the Vietnam War and during Operation Desert Storm. Following his service in Vietnam, he went on to illustrate children's books and medical texts.



U.S. MARINE CORPS RESERVE

1985, by Keith McConnell



Leave Toys Here

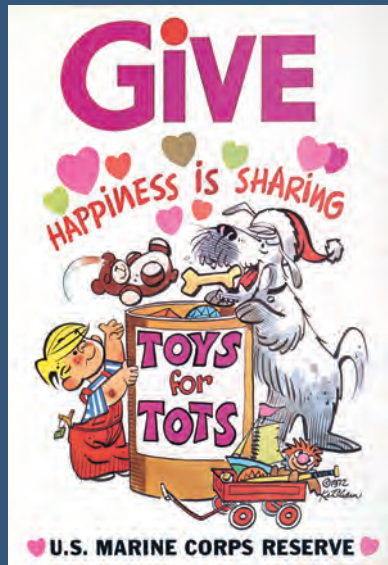
1982, 35th Anniversary, by Keith McConnell

COURTESY OF KEITH MCCONNELL

COURTESY OF KEITH MCCONNELL

COURTESY OF KEITH MCCONNELL





1972, by Hank Ketcham

COURTESY OF HANK KETCHAM



Walt Disney

COURTESY OF TOYS FOR TOTS

The Toys for Tots program and its posters have had a long association with cartoonists. The organization's first poster was personally supervised by Walt Disney in 1948. Disney also designed the original Toys for Tots logo featuring a toy train. Over the years, Toys for Tots posters have featured numerous cartoon characters, including Daffy Duck, Bugs Bunny, Sylvester the Cat, Wile E. Coyote and the Road Runner, as well as Hank Ketcham's Dennis the Menace and his dog, Ruff.



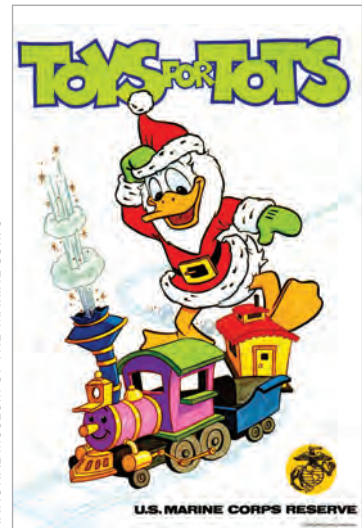
1978, by Bob Moore

WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS



1978, by Bob Moore

WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS



1981, by Bob Moore

WALT DISNEY PRODUCTIONS ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

Bob Moore is another notable artist who designed a Toys for Tots poster. A cornerstone of early Disney animation, Moore was a liaison to the U.S. military, producing special projects for the U.S. government during World War II. He designed the Mickey Mouse-themed poster for the 1978 Toys for Tots campaign. The National Museum of the Marine Corps collection contains an original galley proof of the special poster.

*Author's bio: Jennifer Castro is the Cultural and Material History Curator for the National Museum of the Marine Corps.*

## SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

### Prank Gave Us a Good Laugh

I was stationed in Chu Lai, Vietnam, in 1969 with VMFA-344. As part of our duty, we stood base perimeter guard at night from time to time. There were machine-gun bunker emplacements and every hundred yards or so a tower stood high over the fence line. There was a wide kill zone free of any obstructions and we were permitted to simply open fire into those zones or send up a pop-up flare. The Vietnamese base barber, who cut hair during the day at the makeshift PX, was killed one night trying to come through the fence and concertina wire with a satchel charge on his back.

One night when we were to begin our watch, a young second lieutenant came around acting like a typical new second lieutenant. One of the salty Marines close to me said, "Watch this." As the lieutenant approached our position, the Marine yelled, "Halt, who goes there?" The lieutenant replied, "Lieutenant so-and-so. Officer of the guard." The Marine came back with, "The officer is not recognized. Place your ID on the ground and take 10 steps back." The lieutenant balked and the Marine came unglued, loudly telling him again to halt but adding, "Lie face down away from me."

Quite intimidated now, the lieutenant complied. The Marine walked over and picked up his ID, inspected it, showed it around to several people and then laid it back down and said, "The officer of the guard is recognized." The Marine

came to attention with a rifle salute.

The lieutenant was steaming. We all sat back trying not to be caught laughing. We never heard a word about the incident and never saw that lieutenant again.

Sgt James R. Brooks  
USMC, 1966-1970  
Jacksonville, Fla.

### The DJ Played it Well

In 1961, after a three-year tour with an 81 mortar platoon at Camp Pendleton, Okinawa and in the South China Sea areas, my buddy, Corporal Ronald Peacock, and I were transferred to Marine Barracks Security Detachment, Naval Ammunition Depot, Concord, Calif. While reporting in, the staff sergeant from the admin office stopped by and asked if either of us could type.

**We got to talking to the DJ and told him how the major was always yelling to turn the radio down. The DJ said for us to be listening Monday at 1 p.m. and he would fix the major.**

Knowing it was in my personnel record, I had no choice but to say that I could. Thus, on the spot I was assigned to admin.

I had a desk by the window that overlooked the courtyard and flagpole. On the window ledge I had a big portable radio that I checked out from Special

Services and kept tuned to a country western station in Vallejo. The XO's office was a couple of doors down from our office and the XO, Major Grubaugh, was always yelling, "Putnam, turn that radio down!" Sometimes he'd yell to turn it off.

One Saturday, Cpl Peacock wanted to shop for a car, so we went into town and stopped by a dealership. It just happened that the country station that I listened to was doing a live promotion broadcast. We got to talking to the DJ and told him how the major was always yelling to turn the radio down. The DJ said for us to be listening Monday at 1 p.m. and he would fix the major. We didn't know what he was going to do. We had a reel-to-reel recorder in our office and decided to record the show.

The time came and the DJ came on and started telling a story about when he was a DJ on Armed Forces Radio in Guam. The officers' club was always playing classical music and there was a young lieutenant who would sneak by the station at night and ask him to play some country music for him. The DJ said, "I hear that young lieutenant is now a major and is stationed in the area. So, for Major Grubaugh over at Marine Barracks in Concord, this next song is for him." Then the twangy voice of Roy Acuff started singing "The Great Speckled Bird," which is about as country as you can get.

At that moment Maj Grubaugh came to the door and yelled, "Putnam, I'll have your job, your stripes and your ass!" That put the fear in me waiting for my hell. We learned later that the major had taken the recording home for his wife

to hear. Nothing more was ever said about it.

Peacock lives in Florida, and we are still very close.

Cpl James P. "Old Put"  
Putnam  
USMC, 1958-1962  
Madison, Ala.

### I Became a Legend In My Own Mind

Our student detachment of future aircraft technicians at the Naval Aviation Technical Training Center in Memphis, Tenn., was overseen by two salty, old NCOs. One was a corporal and the other an old sergeant. We students were all privates or privates first class.

The corporal looked like Yogi Bear and he carried a big stick to enhance his image. The sergeant was more of a smooth operator type and drove a big Buick. One day, Yogi and the smooth operator organized a weekend liberty convoy to a country bar and dance hall they heard about up in the boot heel of Missouri. They rounded up two other cars and packed six of us into each and headed off through Memphis and across the bridge to West Memphis following the river to the boot heel.

We stopped in every little roadhouse bar along the way. Yogi would have us fall out in platoon formation and march us inside. We were all in greens and made quite an impression. By the time we reached our final destination in Missouri, we were really whipped up for a good time.

The place was way out in the boonies down a dirt road. It was really rocking by the time we got there. There was a liquor store attached to the dance hall so my friend and I bought a fifth and went inside the bar and found a table. The place

was packed, and the country music was rocking. As soon as we marched in, the girls took notice. This had a negative effect on the local male population.

At one point I realized the place was empty, so I walked outside into a huge crowd standing in a circle in front of the building. In the clearing was the sergeant on his knees, holding his head, and yelling "I can't see, I can't see." A guy from the band came up to him with a blackjack and hit him over the head. As he raised his arm to hit the sergeant again, I grabbed it and yelled "No!"

One of the other guys from the band squirted something in my eyes that felt like acid, and I blacked out. I woke up blind and in pain in the back seat of Yogi's car careening back down the dirt road trying to escape. We made it to a broken-down ferry boat and back across the river.

I figured out what they sprayed by the smell. It was ammonia. I leaned down over the side of the boat scooping upriver water to wash out my eyes.

I survived the incident without permanent damage, but my friends who were with me remembered the smell. Even to this day, a couple of my old buddies from those days will remind me of the time I took on the hillbilly band in the boot heel of Missouri.

Cpl Norm Spilleth  
USMC, 1960-1964  
Minneapolis, Minn.

### **Outspoken Behavior Caused a Stir**

When my battalion, 2/5, relieved 3/9 on Okinawa in June 1965, we were the less-than-proud recipients of the worst batch of military equipment handed down in modern military history. In early 1965, 3/9 was among the first Marine units in Vietnam. Those were the days of the trans placement battalions when battalions

would rotate between California and WestPac.

After the transfer of colors, we spent about a month on Okinawa getting our things together before going in-country. As noted earlier, the equipment left to us was a joke. There wasn't a piece of canvas or web gear that was in anywhere near serviceable condition. Ditto with anything made of metal. Typewriters, tools, and most crew-served weapons were a solid chunk of rust.

About two weeks before embarking the battalion,

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**LtGen Krulak asked if we were ready to move out. ... He looked at me and said, "Sergeant, you haven't said a word this entire meeting. Do you agree with these gentlemen? Do you think you're ready to go?"**

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the commanding officer, supply officer, assorted company commanders and I were invited to the Division commander's office for the purpose of assessing the readiness of the battalion. I was invited because I was the acting supply chief and I guess some misguided soul thought I would have some input.

Upon entering the commanding general's office, we encountered the CG and a gaggle of staff officers, and over in the corner was the "Brute," Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak himself, in a big, overstuffed leather chair.

After a lot of talking, LtGen Krulak asked if we were ready to move out. Lieutenant Colonel Tunnell answered in the affirmative.

When the general addressed the supply officer with the same question, he said, "Yes, Sir." Just when I thought I was home free, he looked at me and said, "Sergeant, you haven't said a word this entire meeting. Do you agree with these gentlemen? Do you think you're ready to go?" I replied, "No, Sir!" and commenced voicing my concerns. I was, by far, the least popular person in that room from then on. The look on my CO's face said it all.

As a result of my behavior, however, we received truckloads of every piece of equipment imaginable. After we were in-country and unpacked the bulk of the load, we were blessed with spare 6X engines, water purification equipment, M1 rifles and all manner of useless gear. Apparently, LtGen Krulak ordered war reserve supplies for us that were stashed away on the island for years.

Many months later I was in Force Logistic Support Group. During LtGen Krulak's quick inspection tour of my current unit, the general broke away from his escorts, went out of his way to come over to my desk, stick out his hand and said, "Staff Sergeant Eveler, it's good to see you again, hope you're keeping this outfit honest also." I was flabbergasted. The Commanding General of the Fleet Marine Force Pacific, who had to have had millions of facts and figures in his mind, remembered me.

1stLt Bernie Eveler, USMC  
(Ret)  
1953 to 1973  
Beaufort, S.C.

### **The Excitement Turned to Disappointment**

I enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1968, went through recruit training at Parris Island and spent part of 1969 and 1970 in I Corps attached to the Combined Action Platoon 3/3/2 in the Thua

Thien providence, south of the city of Hue in Vietnam. I loved getting packages from home. My mom sent packages every couple of weeks. Since we were always eating C-rations or rice with the villagers, the packages were great because they always contained fudge, brownies, cookies and other good stuff. My squad would always gather around to see what my mom had sent, knowing they would get some treats too.

Once during monsoon season, we were surprised to see K-rations (dehydrated food) kicked off the chopper. I noticed that inside the rations were spoons, forks, knives and chocolate and vanilla cereal bars made by Van Brodie Mills in Clinton, Mass., my hometown, and where my mom worked. She had asked her boss about sending the cereal bars, so they put together a box of about 50 bars and sent them to me.

When I got the box, my squad was gathered around expecting something good. When I opened the box and they saw the bars and a huge groan went up like I had just opened a can of "ham and mothers." But I enjoyed them and shared them with some of the squad.

I wrote to my mom about what happened, and she never sent cereal bars again.

I've been reading *Leatherneck* for years. It's a great magazine for Marines.

Cpl Alex Ditinno  
Largo, Fla.

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Do you have any interesting stories 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: *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to [leatherneck@mca-marines.org](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org). We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA membership for the "Sea Story of the Month." 🍷



# A Glimpse Behind a Promotion Board Curtain

By Capt Obakai Grandisson, USMC and Capt Sheldonia Simmers, USMC

**Above: The Basic School conducts a warrant officer appointment ceremony for the graduating class of "India" Company at Little Hall, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., Feb. 1, 2018. (Photo by Cpl Yasmin D. Perez, USMC)**

**M**any Marines wonder what occurs inside selection boards at Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC). Our goal is to describe our observations of a recent Enlisted to Warrant Officer (WO) Regular Selection Board and provide insight on general processes without violating any oaths all Marines swear prior to the start of each board or disclosing any specific proceedings of the board. We'll describe board trends, publicly available policies governing boards, and the processes by which Marines are selected for promotion, schools and command.



The Basic School (TBS) conducts a warrant officer appointment ceremony for the graduating class of India Co at Little Hall, MCB Quantico, Va., Feb. 1, 2018. The Warrant Officer Basic Course is a 16-week training program located at TBS aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico that molds enlisted personnel who have reached the rank of sergeant or above into warrant officers. (Photo by LCpl Yasmin D. Perez, USMC)

### **Warrant Officer Board Background**

The Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC M&RA) delegates administration of Warrant Officer accession selection boards to the Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruiting Command. The Enlisted to Warrant Officer Board is not a statutory board, which means if the Marine is not selected on this board there is no impact on the Marine's traditional promotion path. A Secretary of the Navy Instruction explains eligibility criteria, waivers, and the selection process for Limited Duty and Warrant Officer programs, and annual MARADMIN messages are issued which provide the latest guidance based on the needs of the Marine Corps.

### **Pre-Board Procedures**

Board members and recorders will spend several weeks in a Promotion Branch boardroom in Quantico preparing packages, briefing, voting, and at times re-voting in an attempt to choose the best and brightest of the enlisted ranks who are ready promotion to the grade of WO.

Recorders are responsible for preparing the board for the members. They arrive a few days early in order to become familiar with the digital system (portal), configure the portal for the particular board, and organize the packages so that the members can begin reviewing packages as soon as the board is convened. This preparation time includes assigning the packages to the requested Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) board sub-group or "category." Although

Below: Marines with Warrant Officer Basic Course (WOBC) hike to a range on MCB Quantico, Va., April 2, 2019. WOBC is designed to train and educate newly appointed and commissioned warrant officers in a variety of skills required to transition from enlisted Marine to officer, with particular emphasis on the duties, responsibilities and warfighting skills required of a rifle platoon commander. (Photo by WO Kowshon Ye, USMC)



**Above: An estimated 2,049 warrant officers are serving in the Marine Corps, according to a June 2014 report from the Total Force Planning and Requirements Directorate. (Photo by Christine Cabalo, USMC)**

a simple task, the assignment process can take more than two days' worth of manhours, depending on the number of packages and categories included in the board. While assigning packages to categories, the Recorders reviewed the requested MOS to ascertain whether or not the MOS requested was open. If a Marine submitted a package for a closed MOS and either requested not to be given any other MOS or was not qualified for another MOS, the Marine's chances of being selected as WO on the board came to an abrupt halt. If a Marine submitted a package to become a WO but only submitted for one MOS, they were immediately pigeon-holed with limited options. This meant if the one Primary MOS (PMOS) they requested was already closed out or they were not as competitive as those selected due to the Occupational

Field (Occ Field) sponsors' guidance, then their journey to inclusion within the officer ranks stopped short, at least at this board.

Marines who submit a request to become a WO for multiple MOSs were coded for secondary MOSs in case their first choice was unavailable. Marines in this category opted to accept any WO MOS or specific alternative MOS's. These Marines were looked at within a "second round" and "third round" draft-like process. The list of available WO PMOSs for FY22 was publicly available in a previously released MARADMIN. According to the pertinent Secretary of the Navy Instruction, a precept "will specify in the precept the maximum number of officers in each grade and competitive category that the board may recommend for promotion consistent with the annual



**Students plan a defense during a field training exercise during Warrant Officer Basic Course 1-19 on MCB Quantico, Va., April 9, 2019. WOBC is designed to train and educate newly appointed and commissioned warrant officers in a variety of skills required to transition from enlisted Marine to officer.**

WO KOWSHON YE USMC

promotion plan. The boards are not required to select to the numbers provided.”

Board members include officers resourced from across the Marine Corps. The President of the Warrant Officer board is a colonel, who is briefed prior to the commencement of the board concerning lateral limits, responsibilities, and expectations. The president sets the rules regarding the conduct of the board based on the briefing and personal preferences.

Most members are unlikely to have sat on any promotion board previously due to the all-encompassing nature of the pool of possible MOS backgrounds from which members can be culled to serve on the board. For this reason, staff from HQMC are on-hand to assist board members and the President with navigating the portal and resolving

technical difficulties. The staff works with the Board Recorders to make the package review preparation and briefing process as smooth as possible. This includes sourcing missing documents from packages, calling commands for clarification, and contacting applicants when they were the only source for the desired information.

Before the board officially begins and the president, recorders, members, and administrative staff are sworn in, Occ Field sponsors from HQMC brief the members (“members” includes the board president). The Occ Field sponsors discussed preferred qualifications, military schools, certifications, and billets which the Occ Field sponsor believed a subject matter expert making the transition from enlisted to Warrant Officer should possess.

Students with Warrant Officer Basic Course 1-19 practice map reading on Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., Feb. 15, 2019.



WO KOWSHON YE, USMC

**Below: CWO-2 Douglas McGlothlin is promoted to his present rank by his wife, Tiffany, and Capt Rineet Rajan, the executive officer of Recruiting Station Baltimore, at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, Feb. 5, 2015.**

Each Occ Field sponsor has a block of time in which to make their case to the members concerning the type of Marines the members should select to fill the gaps in their fields. The range of topics discussed was broad, but a few briefing trends emerged to include the willingness or unwillingness of Occ Field sponsors to recommend members select an applicant from outside of certain “feeder” MOSs (e.g.: enlisted intel to WO intel or enlisted ammunition to WO ammunition) to become a warrant officer within the Occ Field Sponsor’s field and a bent toward quality over quantity.

Marines who qualified for and submitted packages for multiple MOSs were coded for their secondary MOS in the case that their first choice was

unavailable, or they were not selected during the voting for their first choice category. Marines who stated that they were willing to accept any MOS were moved into MOSs for which the members thought they would be most qualified. The end state was to identify Marines who could pass Warrant Officer Basic Course (WOBC) and quickly become subject matter experts in their new field.

### Board Briefings

After all the members, recorders, and administrative support staff are sworn in, the members begin reviewing packages in preparation for briefing. The president determines the timelines and ensures the members hold to it. The members held a variety of MOSs ranging from manpower and intelligence officers to ground supply and postal officers. This made for well-rounded discussions concerning certain aspects of a Marine’s package that may not be easily understood by a member who had no knowledge of the Marine’s requested MOS.

There are various reasons for the removal of packages from the board’s consideration, including a Marine being the subject of an ongoing investigation or a Marine who did not receive a favorable endorsement by their chain of command post-submission; Marines must obtain an endorsement letter from the first general officer in their chain of command.

In order to get through the mountain of packages, each briefer is allotted three minutes in which to brief each of their assigned packages. The easier a package is to read and follow, the easier it is for the briefer to condense the Marine’s years of service



SGT BRYAN NYGAARD, USMC





into a three-minute brag sheet of the Marine being briefed. During preparation, briefers rate the package submitted by the Marine being briefed on a scale of one to six with six being the highest recommendation a briefers can give a Marine whereas a one is the lowest. Briefers take notice when a commanding officer writes a letter of recommendation telling the board to, “Brief this Marine as six!”, showing their familiarity with the selection board process. Briefers also make a point to inform the members that Page 11s for out-of-regulation tattoos that were within regulation at the time of the board and should be disregarded. Briefers take negative notice when there were multiple misspellings within a personal statement, a lack of cogency among the recommendations from the chain of command, and discrepancies in the record concerning NJP entries and time in service data.


Letters of recommendation from a chief warrant officer from within the MOS, PME completeness, a neat and chronological Official Military Professional File (OMPF), a well written essay that spoke to an understanding of the “big picture,” and consistent, prolonged excellence went a long way for the members as they chose who to select. Although the briefers has an undeniable influence on how well

a package and the Marine presents to the members, the accomplishments of the Marine, captured within the package, are the basis for selection.

### Closing Thoughts

There are various reasons why a Marine is not selected to become a warrant officer, but the main two are competition and requested MOS unavailability. Talented Marines are not selected sometimes due to the heavy competition among many candidates for few boat spaces. It is important for Marines applying for selection as a WO not to see a “non-selection” as a rejection, but rather as a chance to gain more experience so they can re-apply with a more competitive package.

*Author’s bio: Capt Grandisson is currently the marketing and communications officer for 8th Marine Corps District. He’s served in command element and ground combat element units during his time in the Marine Corps.*

*Capt Simmers is currently assigned as trial counsel at Legal Service Support Team, MCRD Parris Island. She has previously served in a variety of SJA billets at MCIEAST and as a series commander at Parris Island.* 

**WO Michael Bell poses for a photo after a hike during Warrant Officer Basic Course 1-19 on MCB Quantico, Va., Feb. 7, 2019. (Photo by WO Kowshon Ye, USMC)**

# Morale on Tap

## Marine's Vietnam Beer Run Story Made into Movie



By 2ndLt Kyle Daly, USMC

**J**ohn “Chickie” Donohue says he has one rule: Whatever the story is, it must be 99 percent true. “Otherwise, you’re just a bullshit artist,” Donohue, 81, told *Leatherneck* recently during a phone interview.

Donohue, a veteran Marine who describes himself as a “storyteller,” said those close to him say he has the craziest tales. But they also know, he’s no bullshit artist.

One of the craziest adventures Donohue has ever experienced—and therefore, recounted—has been turned into a movie, starring Zac Efron as Donohue, and

costarring Russell Crowe and Bill Murray. In late 1967, the 26-year-old Donohue, then a Marine veteran working as a merchant seaman, sailed to Vietnam and ventured into a warzone with the sole purpose of tracking down buddies from his New York City neighborhood and delivering beer to them.

The trailer to the film, “The Greatest Beer Run Ever,” advises viewers, using large white letters on the screen: “A REAL GUY ACTUALLY DID THIS.” The film debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival in September and was released Sept. 30 on the streaming service Apple TV+.

If the story’s summary sounds ridiculous, then the specifics of the adventure will appear even more unreal. At an outpost in the jungle, Donohue hunkered down in a foxhole during a firefight between U.S. Army soldiers and the North Vietnamese enemy. He was in Saigon during the start of the Tet Offensive and got a front row seat to the January 1968 attack on the U.S. embassy. And on more than one occasion, a military officer mistook him to be a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) representative—a mistake that worked in his favor.

Just to be clear, Donohue had no connection with the military—or the CIA—while in Vietnam. He was a civilian wandering a war-torn country. When the ship he had sailed on left port without him, Donohue became stuck in the country without a passport or visa. One soldier’s reaction to Donohue’s presence in Vietnam speaks to the audience of this tale: “You’re telling me you don’t have to be here, and you’re here?!”

The best part of his Homeric journey is that Donohue fulfilled what he set out to do—give beer to guys from his neighborhood. While he didn’t find everyone on his list, Donohue did track down four: Tommy Collins, Rick Duggan, Bobby Pappas and Kevin McCloone.

The four men, and Donohue, all made it home safely.

Why is Donohue’s story so appealing to people? “It’s kind of a crazy thing he did,” said Bobby Pappas, who served in the Army in Vietnam. “He put his life at risk to make us guys feel good,” Pappas told *Leatherneck*. “It was a great morale booster for the four of us who were involved.”

Because anti-war protesters vilified the men in uniform who served in Vietnam the idea of delivering beer was to show appreciation for their service. “GIs were coming home when I was an adult, being spat upon, being called baby killers, murderers, all sorts of [names] ... that

bothered the hell out of me,” Donohue said.

The movie is based on the book Donohue cowrote with retired New York journalist J.T. Molloy. The book, which bears the same title as the film, describes the Manhattan neighborhood in which Donohue grew up. Inwood was a patriotic community filled with men who had served their country. On Sunday, the “Star Spangled Banner” was sung in church.

“Your feelings of patriotism were connected to your religious beliefs,” Donohue wrote in the book. “They were cut from the same sacred cloth.”

Pappas said those who grew up in Inwood were very close.

“We played stickball in the street, two-hand-touch football,” Pappas said. “It was just a really good neighborhood to grow up in and most people from the neighborhood still keep in touch with other people from the neighborhood.”

This feeling of patriotism and showing support for his neighborhood friends fueled Donohue’s desire to accomplish an outlandish goal. It’s one part of Donohue’s story that attracted the filmmakers. “What I loved about Chickie’s story was this great love of country and friends,” screenwriter Pete Jones said.

Film director Peter Farrelly wrote the movie with Jones and Brian Currie. Farrelly and Currie previously collaborated on the script for their Oscar award winning film, “Green Book.” In an interview with *Leatherneck*, Currie and Jones said the source material for the film included Donohue’s book as well as conversations with Donohue and the four friends he tracked down in Vietnam.

Jones said Donohue viewed his friends and other servicemembers in Vietnam the same way people view those who fought in World War I and World War II—as heroes.

“We were taken by that,” Jones said. “We were taken by that camaraderie.”

By the end of 1967, Inwood had lost 28 men in the Vietnam War. That included people Donohue personally knew—people like Tommy Minogue, 20, a platoon medic in the Army who died in battle while treating the wounds of his commanding officer.

Donohue, who had served from 1958 to 1962, had tried to rejoin the Marines in 1967, but was rejected. They cited his age as the reason. However, in his conversation with *Leatherneck*, Donohue speculated, with a laugh, that maybe they had read his record.

Donohue entered the Marines as a private and left the Corps as a private. Like many of the interesting things about John “Chickie” Donohue, there’s a story behind this. And yes, it involves beer.

## “Off the Record”

Donohue didn’t serve his country playing poker at a military base in Massachusetts—a joke which was told in the film. He served in Japan and later was stationed on an island near Puerto Rico. He was part of the permanent personnel on the island, which would host regular training exercises conducted by Marines stationed stateside. On Jan. 6, 1962, with a little more than eight months remaining on his enlistment, Donohue, a lance corporal, got into a stolen military jeep with Marines who were participating in one of those exercises. He showed the other Marines the route to a place called Santa Maria, which required a drive over mountains on a dirt path. That day, they “drank a lot of beer,” he said.



COURTESY OF APPLE TV+

**Actor Zak Efron plays veteran Marine John “Chickie” Donohue in the film “The Greatest Beer Run Ever,” which premiered Sept. 30 on Apple TV+. In late 1967, Donohue, a civilian, ventured into the war-torn country on a mission to track down his friends who were serving in Vietnam and deliver them beer.**

## One soldier’s reaction to Donohue’s presence in Vietnam speaks to the audience of this tale: “You’re telling me you don’t have to be here, and you’re here?!”

“And we were coming back, and I was the passenger. And this other guy, he drove it right off the mountain,” Donohue said. “He went out on the left side and stayed on the mountain. I went down the mountain in the jeep. And I don’t remember anything after that.”

Donohue received treatment in the field before a helicopter took him to a hospital on Puerto Rico. His ankle was almost ripped off during the incident, and when they sewed up his injury in the field, the wound wasn’t cleaned properly. “It became infected for months,” he said.

Donohue never again saw the other Marines he was with that day and didn’t tell investigators about them. The only thing the military found that day was his unconscious body

**“The Greatest Beer Run Ever,” a new Apple TV+ movie, features Zac Efron, left, as veteran Marine John “Chickie” Donohue and Jake Picking as Rick Duggan.**



COURTESY OF APPLE TV+

and the stolen jeep. A warrant officer investigating the incident told Donohue he would keep the story between them if only the lance corporal gave him details for his investigation.

“He assured me it was off the record,” Donohue said. “He couldn’t figure out anything without me. So, I told him essentially what happened.”

But the warrant officer didn’t keep it off the record, and Donohue was court martialed. His rank was reduced to private. Donohue later appealed the decision, and it was overturned just weeks before his active enlistment was up. According to him, however, his rank was never restored. He remained a private.

### **“Bring Them Each a Beer”**

What’s perhaps most believable about Donohue’s Vietnam beer run story is that the idea to deliver beer was concocted in a bar.

The neighborhood watering hole frequented by Donohue was Doc Fiddler’s bar on Sherman Avenue and Isham Street. The idea for the beer run was not Donohue’s, and the film accurately gives credit to the person who did come up with the suggestion: George Lynch, the bartender. Lynch, as described in Donohue’s book, was “a great military historian and patriot.” Although only a private when he served in the Army, he was given the nickname “the Colonel.” In the movie, he’s played by Bill Murray.

**... the idea appealed to Donohue. Maybe he could do it, he thought. Maybe he could bring them beer.**

When Donohue was at the bar one night in November 1967, the Colonel, upset after watching protesters on the news on the bar’s TV, said the troops must be demoralized from the anti-war sentiment. In the book, Donohue describes how the anti-war protesters were becoming “anti-soldier.”

“Somebody ought to go over to ’Nam, track down our boys from the neighborhood, and bring them each a beer!” the Colonel said.

The Colonel then turned to Donohue and asked to borrow his seaman’s card—an ID issued to mariners by the U.S. Coast Guard—so he could get on a ship and carry out such a mission. Donohue knew the Colonel couldn’t take his seaman’s card, which was a picture ID, but the idea appealed to Donohue. Maybe *he* could do it, he thought. Maybe *he* could bring them beer.

“I thought it was a great suggestion, as crazy as it might have sounded,” he told *Leatherneck*.

Donohue said he wasn’t doing anything at the time. As a merchant mariner, he was “on the beach,” which means he wasn’t currently sailing on a ship. In his book, Donohue wrote, “I was

doing nothing, simply hanging out and drinking beer with my buddies, while our friends were over there dying or wounded or in harm’s way.”

He pondered it and then gave in. “I told them, ‘Get me the addresses, and I’ll go over there, I’ll take a ship over there and jump ship and go find them,’” he said.



**The production team hired a military advisor to work with Efron and the other actors in order to ensure the film's authenticity. (Photo courtesy of Apple TV+)**

According to the book, people in the neighborhood quickly found out what “Chickie” was attempting to do.

Friends and family called him “Chickie,” and to this day, still do. The nickname was pinned on him when he was a child. His father, who played the piano, made him and his five siblings each sing a song before they went to bed at night. Donohue said he was so young, he could barely talk at the time. The song he sang, featured on the “Your Hit Parade” radio program, was called “Chickery Chick.” Years later, Donohue would meet a businessman whose first name was “Chick,” and had it featured on his business cards. Donohue then made “Chick” the formal version of the nickname and also featured it on his own business cards.

People came to Doc Fiddler’s the next day with information on their family members serving in Vietnam. Donohue took the information.

If there was any thought of perhaps backing out of the journey, those thoughts evaporated when one person came to the bar—the mother of Donohue’s friend, Tommy Collins.

“I never saw Mrs. Collins in the bar in my life,” Donohue told *Leatherneck*. “Irish woman. Right off the boat, with the brogue and all.” She brought Donohue rosary beads to give to Tommy. “And now, now I’m locked in,” he said. “I can’t disappoint Mrs. Collins.”

### “Divine Intervention”

Within two days of agreeing to bring beer to people from his neighborhood serving in Vietnam, Donohue secured an oiler job on a ship, the 455-foot SS *Drake Victory*, which was departing to Vietnam on the same day he went to the maritime union hall to find work. Donohue

had previously sailed to Vietnam. Coincidentally, on that first trip, the ship was full of beer, he said.

Before boarding, Donohue went to a bar near the dock and purchased a case of beer that included local brands such as Pabst Blue Ribbon, Schaefer, Schlitz, Piels, Ballantine and Rheingold. It took eight weeks for the *Drake Victory*, an ammo ship, to get to Vietnam.

It sailed through the Panama Canal and crossed the Pacific, eventually arriving at South Vietnam’s Qui Nhon Harbor.

To carry out his plan, Donohue told the captain of *Drake* that he had a stepbrother serving in Vietnam and that he had “terrible news in the family which I feel I have to break to him personally,” according to Donohue’s account in his

## About the Film

“The Greatest Beer Run Ever”

Skydance Media, Living Films

Director  
Peter Farrelly

Distributed by  
Apple TV+

Cast  
Zac Efron, Russell Crowe,  
Bill Murray

Run time: 126 minutes  
Release Date: Sept. 30, 2022

Screenplay  
Peter Farrelly, Brian Currie,  
Pete Jones

Where to watch: Apple TV+ streaming service  
How to watch: Go to tv.apple.com for more information.

Production companies  
Apple Original Films,

book. After assuring the ship's captain that his shifts were covered in the engine room, the captain, without asking more questions, told Donohue to be back on board by 8 a.m. in three days' time, and "Don't get killed."

You can call it luck, or, in Donohue's words, "divine intervention," but how Donohue tracked down his friends is nothing short of a miracle.

The first person he found was Tommy Collins. Collins was part of the Army's 127th MP Company, which was protecting ships in the harbor. As fate would have it, the American cargo ship Collins was protecting was in port near the *Drake Victory*. On the very day Donohue set out to find his friends, he found Collins. They spent the night with other men from his company partying at a bar. Donohue then crashed at Collins' barracks.

The next morning, Donohue set out to find Rick Duggan, an Army sergeant in the 1st Air Cavalry's "Bravo" Company. While out at the bar with Collins the previous night, Donohue met a 1st Air Cavalry crew chief from Texas who knew where Bravo Company was located. He said Donohue could ride in their plane as they made a mail run the next morning. That morning, they flew 40 miles from Qui Nhon to An Khe in the Central Highlands. Donohue learned that Duggan's company had left that location, but that a few from the company were still around about a mile up the road from the airfield.

Donohue traveled the mile on foot and met a supply sergeant who said there was a plane leaving shortly from An Khe to where the company was located—farther north near the Demilitarized Zone. Donohue immediately started walking back to the airfield and found himself walking alone through the jungle. That's when a jeep carrying three men came down the road, and again, fate intervened. Donohue waved down the jeep, hopped in and discovered the driver was Kevin McCloone, another person on his list.

McCloone had been to Vietnam before as a Marine, as part of helicopter squadron HMM-261. When he met Donohue on that road in the jungle, McCloone was a civilian, working on the same helicopters, but now as a private contractor. McCloone and the others in the jeep enjoyed the beer that Donohue handed them.

When they got back to the airfield, Donohue was able to secure a seat on the plane heading north. They landed in Phu Bai, an airfield on the coast. Donohue hopped into the back of a personnel carrier with soldiers he met on the plane and rode to a landing zone where helicopters were parked. It was here that Donohue played up what he calls in the book "the CIA Effect" while talking to a mid-level officer. A civilian traveling with the military in Vietnam without orders was essentially impossible, but since officers mistakenly took him to be a spy, Donohue pulled it off. He secured a seat on a Huey helicopter and

... Again, fate intervened.  
Donohue waved down the jeep,  
hopped in and discovered the  
driver was Kevin McCloone,  
another person on his list.



COURTESY OF APPLE TV+

The film "The Greatest Beer Run Ever" is based on a book by veteran Marine John "Chickie" Donohue, played by Zac Efron, about his almost unbelievable trip to Vietnam during the war. Donohue had high praise for Efron's portrayal of him.

rode it to a place called LZ Jane. There, he found Duggan.

Unlike the previous two Inwood residents on Donohue's list, Sgt Duggan was in combat. When a sergeant major discovered that Donohue wasn't supposed to be out in the jungle with the company, he put Duggan in charge of Donohue, who was wearing civilian clothes. Donohue was given a poncho so he wouldn't stand out. That night, he rested in a foxhole with Duggan and other soldiers in Duggan's squad. In the middle of the night, North Vietnamese soldiers snuck up on their position and a firefight broke out.

"I have to admit, I was shaken," Donohue wrote in the book. "Everybody was up and on alert for the rest of the night, no doubt praying for daybreak."

The next day, Donohue went on a patrol with Duggan's squad. Later, he passed out beer to Duggan and his men.

### Saigon and the Tet Offensive

Through a combination of taking military aircraft, riding in vehicles and hiking on jungle roads, Donohue eventually made it back to the port where his ship had been anchored—well past his captain's deadline. The *Drake Victory* had left without him.

To catch his ship, which was headed for Manila in the Philippines, he needed to go to the U.S. embassy in Saigon to get the proper paperwork to fly out of the country. Donohue made it to Saigon by hitching a ride on an Air Force plane flown by a sympathetic pilot who had been a merchant seaman in World War II. He learned of Donohue's situation and let him on the aircraft without orders.

The embassy in Saigon wouldn't let Donohue leave the country until he got a passport and visa—documents he didn't have and documents that would take time to process. Donohue lived on \$40 a day, compensation for seaman stuck in a foreign country. While living at a hotel in the city, he found the rooftop bar at the Caravelle Hotel, a place frequented by journalists covering the war. The bar and the journalists who drank there are shown in the film—one of them played by Russell Crowe.

Once Donohue got the proper documents, he was scheduled to fly out of Vietnam on Jan. 31, 1968. That day, the North Vietnamese launched a massive offensive operation targeting various cities in South Vietnam, including Saigon. That operation, which cost hundreds of American lives in the days and weeks that followed, became known as the Tet Offensive, named for the Vietnamese New Year holiday on which it was launched. Donohue's flight never took off. The North Vietnamese seized the airfield he was scheduled to depart from.

In the early hours of the morning of Jan. 31, as the city became a battle zone, Donohue made his way to the embassy. Nineteen Viet Cong commandos had attacked the



COURTESY OF APPLE TV+

Russell Crowe, left, and Zac Efron star in "The Greatest Beer Run Ever," a film depicting the true story of John "Chickie" Donohue.

embassy and a six-hour battle ensued. Donohue witnessed some of the fighting at the embassy and would later see fighting at the South Vietnamese Presidential Palace. He would arm himself with a .45-caliber pistol. Donohue later wrote in his book that he thought he might have died during the chaos.

"I fell deep in thought, and I went back to my Catholicism, my religious training, and I believed then that I must be in purgatory," he wrote.

Donohue ended up staying in Vietnam for weeks longer. During that time, he was able to find one more person on his list—Bobby Pappas. Pappas was an Army sergeant who worked as a communications specialist. He was also Donohue's best friend. Pappas was at Long Binh, an army base and ammunition supply depot about an hour from Saigon. Donohue hitched a ride to the base and found his friend. He gave Pappas beer from New York.

It wasn't until March that Donohue got a job aboard another ship and sailed back to Seattle. From there, he took a flight home to New York.

### "A Guy Actually Did That?"

Years later, J.T. Molloy, a recently retired journalist who had written for the *New York Post* and other publications, convinced Donohue to write a book. It wasn't the first time Donohue had tried to get the story on paper. Others had

also tried making it into a Hollywood film, but nothing played out. Molloy, however, convinced him to get the book self-published.

“So, we taped my story. And it took us years,” he said. “I don’t know why so long, but it took us a couple years. And we did the book. And we self-published.”

The book, “The Greatest Beer Run Ever,” was originally published in 2017.

Before that, filmmaker Andrew J. Muscato made a documentary of Donohue’s story in 2015, which was uploaded to YouTube and seen by director Peter Farrelly.

Screenwriter Brian Currie, who had collaborated with Farrelly on their Oscar-winning movie, “Green Book,” said he got an email from the director with a link to the YouTube video.

“He was like, ‘Hey, what do you think? This is a great story. Should this be our next movie?’ ” Currie told *Leatherneck*. “I loved it right off the bat.”

Farrelly also contacted Pete Jones, who wrote the 2011 comedy “Hall Pass” that Farrelly codirected with his brother. According to Jones, Farrelly said he had a story “you were born to write.” Jones described Donohue’s story as one of those tales you just couldn’t make up.

“I’m like, ‘Are you kidding me? A guy actually did that?’ ” Jones said.

Donohue, who had already seen the movie when *Leatherneck* contacted him, said he thought the film adaptation of his adventure was “great.” He did, however, admit he hadn’t heard of Zac Efron prior to the film being made but was pleased with the actor’s performance.

He recounted a conversation he had with Efron about seeing one scene in the film.

“You know, at a certain part, I’m sitting there, and it was the weirdest feeling,” he said. “I’m sitting there and I’m looking up at the screen at you. And it’s reminding me of that time, of that very moment. And that very emotion that you put into that, I started feeling emotional. I was going through it again. You nailed it. You really did—except that accent—but you nailed it.”

Bobby Pappas said he and his wife stopped by the set when Efron was filming one scene in New Jersey. Pappas’ wife was initially against going to the film shoot, but they ultimately decided to stop by just for half an hour.

“We were there for like three and a half hours—once she met Zac Efron, the heartthrob of every woman today,” Pappas said.

Pappas said the movie was a little bit “Hollywoodized,” but they got the gist of the story.

Currie said the screenwriters didn’t have a specific message they wanted the audience to walk away with,

but in telling Chickie’s story, you do see an arc with the Donohue character in the film.

In the movie and in real life, Donohue was a civilian who went from witnessing anti-war protests to being shot at on a foreign battlefield. Donohue got a unique view of seeing how the military and the media told the story of the Vietnam War to the world.

“Through his experiences, you realize that war is not a cut and dry situation,” Currie said. “What you see here and what you experience there are two different things.”

### “Friendship”

Donohue’s best friend, Pappas, gave a simple reason for why the beer run story resonates with so many people.

“It’s just a good story about friendship, and how much one guy is willing to make sure his buddies are doing OK,” he said.

Pappas said he doesn’t want to belittle what Donohue did, but he believes any of the other guys—Collins, McCloone, or Duggan—would have done the same thing.

Pappas was also working as a merchant seaman when he got drafted.

“If I hadn’t gotten drafted, and I’d been home, I would have went with him,” Pappas said. “We both would have signed on to the same ship and we would have went together.”

Pappas hopes the spotlight shined on this incredible story results in better care for veterans who come home from war.

“It’s a realization of how much people have gone through,” said Pappas, who’s dealt with his own post-traumatic stress disorder. “I’d like to see an appreciation for what the guys in Afghanistan have gone through, and the Gulf War, and how horrible war can be.”

When asked if there was a message to be taken from the beer run story, Donohue referenced one scene from the movie.

It’s when Donohue is about to leave his home in New York and head for the ship bound for Vietnam. Donohue’s sister stops him in the street and tries to talk

him out of going on the journey.

“Please don’t do this, this is the dumbest thing I’ve ever heard,” his sister pleads.

Donohue responds, “It’s like you said, everyone’s doing something, I’m doing nothing.”

Chickie Donohue told *Leatherneck* that it just comes down to doing the right thing.

“It was the right thing to do, so I did it.”

*Author’s bio: 2ndLt Kyle Daly is a former journalist who enlisted in the Marine Corps in 2016. He commissioned in 2021 and currently is stationed in San Antonio, Texas, undergoing training as a UAS officer.* 🇺🇸



COURTESY OF JOHN DONOHUE

**(From left to right) Rick Duggan, Bobby Pappas, John “Chickie” Donohue and Tommy Collins, along with Kevin McCloone (seated). In late 1967, Donohue sailed to Vietnam on a mission to deliver beer to his neighborhood friends serving in the Vietnam War. He succeeded in locating four of his friends: Duggan, Pappas, Collins and McCloone. All five men made it home safely and remain in contact today.**



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"The conversations had during the PME forced me to think in different ways that I normally wouldn't in regards to signature management. I was able to come back from the PME and bring the discussion up to my Marines, which forced them to think differently during a very productive (almost heated) debate between some of my team leaders. I am grateful for the Marine Corps Association's support to the 22nd MEU's PME opportunity."

— 1stLt Thomas Mitchell (SIGINT officer)

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# Leatherneck Laffs



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"I owe my Marine camouflage training for never being picked for committees."



# “Christmas Truce”

By F. Gerald Downey

**I**t was late afternoon Dec. 24, 1970, and I stood on the low ground that was to be our night defensive position. I looked up at the mountains and ridges which were fast disappearing into the heavy fog that had unexpectedly descended upon us. The change in weather had canceled out our normal resupply choppers but I wasn't too concerned about it. The previous night we had discovered a rice cache and one of our mechanical ambushes had bagged a large, wild pig. If necessary, I knew we could feed the whole company for two more days. The worst of it was that the failure to resupply meant no delivery of the item we valued above all others—the mail. Infantrymen will always grumble. It comes with the first issue of boot and brass polish, but on this particular Christmas Eve, the grumbling was louder and a little more bitter as we dug in for the night.

We were “Charlie” Company, 2nd Battalion of the 1st Infantry, 196th Infantry Brigade, U.S. Army, and I was the company commander. Naturally, when the word was sent

out, I was the first to get it. “Christmas truce tonight,” the battalion S-3 informed me over the radio. “You know the rules of engagement.”

“Roger,” I replied in a voice that must have betrayed my cynicism. “No offensive actions, all patrols are to be defensive in nature and avoid contact whenever possible.”

“You got it. Have a good Christmas Eve.”

“Roger. Enjoy your mail.” I couldn't resist that last little dig. What line officer could?

It was only 4 p.m. and already the fog was nearly at ground level. We were in the Antenna Valley, west of Da Nang, in what used to be the tactical area of operations of the United States Marines. Oh, the Marines were still around, but they were gradually standing down, and during those times, except for some advisory teams to the South Vietnamese, they were generally much closer to Da Nang. Years of Marine Corps campaigning in the valley were much evidenced by the scores of well-chosen and well-policed old defensive positions in

the area. A Marine officer had given me my pre-operational briefing on the valley a few days before. It wasn't my first tour, and I was pretty salty myself, but I was impressed at how well he knew his business.

Night came fast in I Corps and by 5 p.m. it was dark. The truce went into effect at 6 p.m. At 6:20 p.m. I received a call from the 1st Platoon. “A platoon of NVA just marched across our front, about 200 meters out.” The 1st Platoon was sitting on a small knoll 10 grid squares closer to the valley's mouth. “How'd you see 'em in this weather?” I asked skeptically.

“We spotted them when the fog broke for a minute,” the platoon leader answered. “They walked right between us and our ambushes. But that's not all.”

“What else?”

“The last guy in line actually turned around and waved at us! Some of the guys swear he wished them a Merry Christmas!”

“He probably wished them something,” I said as I went off the air, “but I doubt if it was a Merry Christmas.” I was worried that our mechanical ambushes had been spotted, that





USMC

**The fog was nearly at ground level in the Antenna Valley, west of Da Nang, on Dec. 24, 1970, with almost zero visibility.**

maybe our guys were in too much of a hurry to get back before the fog and night set in and had been a little careless.

Since the claymore mines were detonated by the tripping of a strand of nearly invisible fishing line (which caused the completion of the electrical circuit of a 9-volt transistor radio battery and thus set off the fuse), once the mechanical ambushes were in place, they were too dangerous to move until morning light. Then again, maybe that platoon of NVA had just been lucky.

At 7:30 p.m. one of the claymore ambushes in front of our position exploded. As required by regulations, I reported it to the battalion headquarters and went on about my business, expecting to check it out in the morning as was the established routine. I was shocked when the S-3 came back with, “Check it out. We may need proof that it was a defensive action in case we get charged with violating the truce.”

“It can wait until morning,” I answered with customary defiance.

The battalion commander came on then. “I want it checked out.”

So much for defiance. The squad that placed the claymore was sent to survey their results. Even in the fog I felt their glares as they trudged by in the darkness. The last man out, Private First Class Robinson, paused long enough to lay a

hand on my shoulder and whisper, “Don’t sweat it, Captain. Ain’t no biggie.”

Twenty minutes went by with no report from the patrol. I grew more anxious by the moment, worrying that they had gotten lost in the muggy darkness and might well be unknowingly wandering into the kill area of another squad’s mechanical ambush. I reached for the radio to call them back

when suddenly the night was pierced by bursts of M16 fire, a short return blast by an AK-47, more American shots and the explosion of a fragmentation grenade. Filled with angry thoughts at those men who forced me to order young men out unnecessarily on Christmas Eve, I sat holding the microphone, calm on the outside while fuming within.

The call came quickly from an excited PFC Robinson. “The squad leader’s been hit! We need a Dust Off [helicopter]

right away!”

“Hold on, I’ll send a medic out to you right now. Can you move your wounded man?”

Robinson was calmer when he replied, “No, I don’t think so. He’s bleeding pretty bad.”

My radio operator scurried off to chase down the platoon medic, Doc Ybarra, who was already coming on the run. He hunkered down beside me as I talked to Robinson. “Are you still in contact?”

**The call came quickly  
from an excited  
PFC Robinson. “The squad  
leader’s been hit! We need  
a Dust Off [helicopter]  
right away!”**



“Negative.”

“Okay, tell me your situation.”

Robinson’s voice was well-composed now, He was clearly becoming more comfortable with being the man in charge. “Roger. First, I just sent Hale and Fergy back to the perimeter to guide the Doc.”

“Good thinking. Now, what happened?”

“We walked right up on three NVA. They were dragging a body away from the ambush site. Harder than hell to see out here and we were on them before we saw ‘em. Luckily, they didn’t see us either. Sergeant Gray fired first and got one of ‘em. The others fired back and took off. Gray went to throw a grenade and it went off just as it left his hand. He’s really hurting, Captain. You better get the Doc out here fast.”

Ybarra was gone, following the panting guides, Hale and

Ferguson, who had made the sprint back to the perimeter in less than two minutes. “Doc’s on his way,” I told Robinson. “I’m going to order up a medical evacuation. Have Doc call me and give me a situation report.”

Behind me I heard my radio operator curse.

I turned quickly to him, “What’s the matter?”

I couldn’t see him very well, but I knew from the sound of his voice that he was positively livid. “I went ahead and started the Dust Off procedure on the battalion radio, sir. They won’t come out!”

He was right. The S-3, whom I knew to be a good officer, despite the fact that we didn’t much like one another, told me, “Sorry. The CO of the Dust Offs has grounded his birds due to the bad weather.”

I put the S-3 on hold and went back to the other radio. Doc



JOHN DEGRASSE

**This painting by John DeGrasse illustrates the scene when a Christmas truce was called on Dec. 24, 1970, in the Antenna Valley, Vietnam.**

Ybarra was calling in. “Minor frag wounds in the arm and neck,” he reported. “Most of the blast hit him just behind the right wrist. It’s pretty badly mangled but I think we could save the hand if we get him out of here quickly.”

Back to the other radio. “I need that medevac, weather or no weather.”

The S-3 was doing his best. “Stand by. I’ll try them again.” It took him an hour. I looked at my watch. Actually, the whole affair was less than 20 minutes. The S-3 returned. “Still no dice.”

“Did you talk to the CO?” I asked plaintively.

**I was about to agree when a new voice joined in. “Hello, Army, this is the United States Marine Corps,” the voice said in a pleasant but twangy Texas drawl. “Call sign, Delta Two-Seven.”**

“No, just the duty officer. Everyone else was gone to the company Christmas party. What’s the status of your man?”

I put him on hold again and went back to Doc Ybarra. “He’s gonna live, Sir. But unless we get him out of here, he’s gonna be without one hand for the rest of his life. That ain’t too good when you’re a carpenter like Sgt Gray.”

By this time the S-3 had come on the platoon frequency. “I’ll try again.”

I was about to agree when a new voice joined in. “Hello, Army, this is the United States Marine Corps,” the voice said in a pleasant but twangy Texas drawl. “Call sign, Delta Two-Seven.”

I was in no mood for any interservice fraternization at the moment. “What can I do for you, Delta Two-Seven?”

“I think maybe it’s what I can do for you. Are you the ground commander?”

“Roger.”

“Well, we’ve been listening in for a while, and since I’m in your area, I thought I might drop in and give your man a hand—so to speak.”

“Negative, negative!” The S-3 chimed in. “No aircraft allowed in this area due to weather.”

Delta Two-Seven talked right over him. “I think maybe the bad guys are trying to jam you, Army. You hear somebody else on the line?”

“Nothing but a lot of fuzz, garble and static.”

“Me too. Listen, I should be over you pretty soon. When you hear my engines, give a light to guide on, okay?”

“Will do.” I paused to go back to my own people. “Doc, you got a good LZ out there?”

“Roger. And I’ve got my signal light with me, too. But it’s gonna be tricky because we’re awful close to those ridges.”

I was about to reply when the sound of twin helicopter engines came right over us. Damn, he’s really low, I thought to myself. “Delta Two-Seven, you just passed right over us!”

The reply was a little higher pitched but still cool. “Okay, comin’ back around again. Your guy wasn’t kidding about you being close to those ridges!”

“Ah, Roger, Two-Seven. Sounds like you’re directly south of us now.”

“Good. That’s what I figure too. Hold on, be right back.”

“Doc, when you hear the engines get loud again, give ‘em the light.”

A few seconds passed and then he was on us again. “Oh my God,” I thought aloud. “He’s coming too fast—he’ll never get over the ridges!” Somehow, he made it. I don’t know how. There was no way he could have seen them in that fog, but he made it.

“Hey, Army, what happened to the light? I think I saw one flash and that was all.”

“Doc?”

“Batteries went dead. Got off one flash is all. What are we gonna do now?”

**This is my last flight. I'm homeward bound day after tomorrow. Appreciate the offer." Just before the sound of the engines faded from Antenna Valley I heard him say, "Merry Christmas, Army."**

Delta Seven's next message made it clear that we had to come up with an answer and be quick about it. "I've got just enough fuel for one more pass. No light, no land! Sorry."

My radio operator banged me excitedly on the shoulder. "Sir, when the patrol left, I saw a trip flare on Robinson's shoulder harness!"

I had time only to grip that 18-year-old's hand hard as I grinned into the microphone.

"Robby, you still have that trip flare on your harness?"

Ybarra yelled his reply loud enough that I swore I heard him without the assistance of the radio speaker. "Yeah, he's got it. Oh man, that's great!"

Delta Two-Seven was with us again. I looked out toward the direction of the patrol and was rewarded by the sudden pop and fog diffused light of an ignited trip flare. Delta Two-Seven laughed, "I got it, Army, I got it! Heads down, fellas, here we come!"

The guy was good, no doubt about it. The helicopter couldn't have been on the ground more than five or six seconds when I heard the engines rev and the faster whooshing of the rotor blades. "Got your boy, Army. I'll have him in Da Nang in about 10 minutes courtesy of the United States Marines."

The men around me cheered. I was privately thankful that



USMC

**When SGT Gray was wounded and needed to be evacuated, the fog exacerbated the challenge posed by the high ridges in the area for the incoming medevac helicopter.**

the wetness of the night had dampened my face. "Thanks. I'll stop by the officers' club and buy you a drink in about 10 days when this mission's over."

"Uh-uh, too late. This is my last flight. I'm homeward bound day after tomorrow. Appreciate the offer." Just before the sound of the engines faded from Antenna Valley I heard him say, "Merry Christmas, Army."

We all answered together—me, Ybarra, the S-3 and even the battalion commander who must have been listening in for a long time without saying anything—"Yes, and Merry Christmas to you too, Marine."

The next time I was in Da Nang I walked into the Marine officers' club and bought the house a round, paid the bill and left. I didn't explain, and they didn't ask. 🍷



USMC

**An aerial view of the mountains and ridges which disappeared into heavy fog in the Antenna Valley.**





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## DOD to Strengthen Financial Security For Servicemembers

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III recently announced immediate and long-term actions to help strengthen the economic security and stability of service members and their families. Recognizing the extraordinary pressures that military families face, Secretary Austin has directed numerous actions in four key areas.

To help secure affordable basic needs, the Secretary has directed the department to:

- Review the prospective 2023 Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) tables to ensure calculations reflect the unusually dynamic fluctuations in the housing market.

- Institute automatic increases in BAH for active-duty servicemembers in the 28 Military Housing Areas (MHAs) that have experienced an average of more than 20 percent spike in rental housing costs this year above this year's BAH rates. These automatic increases will go into effect in October 2022. The 28 MHAs include Twentynine Palms, Calif.; San Diego,

Calif.; and Quantico/Woodbridge, Va.

- Fully fund commissaries to cut prices at the register with the goal of achieving at least a 25 percent savings on grocery bills compared to the local marketplace.

- Pay eligible servicemembers the Basic Needs Allowance (BNA) starting January 2023. The BNA is a supplemental allowance for servicemembers with dependents who apply and qualify based on their gross household income.

In addition, the President's budget includes a 4.6 percent pay increase for servicemembers starting Jan. 1, 2023.

To further ease the process of Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, the Secretary has directed the Department to:

- Permanently increase standard Temporary Lodging Expense (TLE) maximum coverage from 10 to 14 days for CONUS moves and allow up to 60 days of TLE if a servicemember is in a specified MHA with a housing shortage, effective in October 2022.

- Increase the Dislocation Allowance (DLA) for E-1 to E-6 servicemembers to further help offset personal expenses for PCS moves. DLA payments for all

servicemembers will be paid automatically one month prior to their move date to preempt out-of-pocket expenses. This will take effect in October 2022.

- Continue improvements to Military OneSource online moving and housing tools.

To further strengthen support to families, the Secretary has directed the department to:

- Make significant investments in Child Development Program (CDP) facilities and infrastructure to further expand our capacity to provide quality childcare.

- Standardize a minimum 50 percent discount for the first child of CDP direct-care workers, helping to attract more talented staff and to increase capacity. This will take effect in October 2022.

- Improve access to childcare programs and resources such as Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood and expand the in-home childcare fee-assistance pilot program to additional states to provide more options to military families.

- Military Child Development Centers hours have already extended their hours to better account for servicemembers' varied



**NATIONAL WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA DAY—Each December on National Wreaths Across America Day, wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery, as well as at more than 2,500 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, are conducted at sea, and abroad by Wreaths Across America. Join Wreaths Across America on Dec. 17, by sponsoring a wreath at a cemetery near you, volunteering, or donating to a local sponsorship group. For more information, visit [www.wreathsacrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org).**

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

schedules. The Department has also reached out to additional high-quality, community-based childcare providers who agree to care for military families using DoD's fee-assistance program.

- The Department has also previously expanded parental leave policies to cover non-chargeable leave following the birth or adoption of a child for active duty and eligible Reserve servicemembers; established a New Parent Support Program; and updated policies to reimburse nursing servicemembers for shipment of breast milk when on mandated temporary duty travel.

To further enhance employment opportunities for military spouses, the Secretary has directed the DOD to:

- Accelerate the development of seven additional occupational licensure interstate compacts with organizations representing multiple professions, easing burdens for spouses who must transfer professional licenses or credentials with each move.

- Increase the use of non-competitive, direct hiring authorities for military spouses in the Department of Defense and further expand remote work and telework options to help military spouses build portable careers.

- Launch a new career-accelerator pilot initiative that will match military spouses with paid private-sector fellowships in a variety of career paths to take effect in January 2023.

Increase the number of partners in the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) by 10 percent before January 2023. MSEP is critical in connecting DoD spouses to organizations committed to hiring them.

DOD

### **PACT Act Expands VA Care, Benefits**

The PACT Act is a new law that expands Veterans Administration (VA) health care and benefits for veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of veterans and their survivors with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve. The PACT Act is perhaps the largest health care and benefit expansion in VA history. The full name of the law is The Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.

The PACT Act will bring these changes:

- Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for veterans with toxic exposures and veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras.

- Adds more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and other toxic exposures.

**The new PACT Act**

- » Expands toxic-exposed Veterans access to VA care
- » Extends health care eligibility for Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 era combat Veterans
- » Adds new presumptive conditions for radiation, Agent Orange, Gulf War toxins, and burn pit exposures

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- Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation.

- Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every veteran enrolled in VA health care.

- Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures.

If you're a veteran or survivor, you can file claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits. To get a VA disability rating, your disability must connect to your military service. For many health conditions, you need to prove that your service caused your condition, but for some conditions, we automatically assume (or "presume") that your service caused your condition. We call these "presumptive conditions." We consider a condition presumptive when it's established by law or regulation. If you have a presumptive condition, you don't need to prove that your service caused the condition. You only need to meet the service requirements for the presumption.

If you haven't filed a claim yet for the presumptive condition, you can file a new claim online now. You can also file by mail, in person, or with the help of a trained professional. If we denied your disability claim in the past and we now consider your condition presumptive, you can submit a Supplemental Claim and your case will be reviewed again.

All veterans and survivors are

encouraged to file for benefits now and PACT Act-related benefits will begin to be processed in January 2023. We must wait for funding approval from Congress and put the needed systems in place before we can process these claims. If you apply for benefits at any time in the next year and we grant your application, we will likely backdate your benefits to the date of the bill signing. This means we will pay you the amount you would have received from Aug. 10, 2022, to the date we grant your application.

If you're a surviving family member of a veteran, you may be eligible for these benefits:

- A monthly VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC) payment. You may qualify if you're the surviving spouse, dependent child, or parent of a veteran who died from a service-connected disability.

- A one-time accrued benefits payment. You may qualify if you're the surviving spouse, dependent child, or dependent parent of a veteran who we owed unpaid benefits at the time of their death.

- A Survivors Pension. You may qualify if you're the surviving spouse or child of a veteran with wartime service.

For more information, visit [www.va.gov/pact](http://www.va.gov/pact) or call 1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411).

# In Memoriam

Compiled by Nancy S. Lichtman

**George Brunette Jr.**, 96, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted after his 1945 high school graduation and served in Japan.

**Claude C. "Sonny" Caelwarts**, 93, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted in 1951 and served in the Korean War. After the war, he returned to his hometown and worked as a painter.

**Wayne L. Caelwaerts**, 79, of Pulaski, Wis. He enlisted after his 1961 graduation from high school. He served one tour in Vietnam.

**Harry R. "Rick" Carlisle**, 73, of Albuquerque, N.M. He served in the Marine Corps Reserve; he also owned and operated a plumbing business.

**Edward "Eddie" Czernek**, 97, of Erie, Pa. During WW II, he served in the South Pacific. Assigned to 1stMarDiv, he saw action on Guadalcanal, Guam and Okinawa.

**Reginald "Reggie" Dunbar Jr.**, 98, of Coal Valley, Ill. He was a Marine who served during WW II. After the war, he worked for a construction company as an electrician for 22 years.

**Maj James O. Elder**, 99, of Greenville, N.C. During WW II he was assigned to an aviation squadron in the South Pacific. During the Korean War he served with 2nd MAW. He later served two tours in Vietnam. His awards include the Bronze Star with combat "V."

**1stSgt William "Bill" Facello**, 86, of Wilmington, N.C. After his 22-year Marine Corps career, he earned his bachelor's degree and became a teacher for 27 years. He was an active volunteer with Toys for Tots, Meals on Wheels and Boy Scouts of America. He was a previous commandant of the Cape Fear MCL Det. 1070.

**Thomas E. Frazier**, 86, of Hampton, Ill. He was a Marine Corps veteran of the Korean War.

**Sgt Billy R. Fox**, 80, of Lenoir, N.C. He was an Eagle Scout who enlisted after his high school graduation. He served for four years and was assigned to the Marine Barracks at Fort Meade, Md. His father and brother also served in the Marine Corps.

**Marvin W. Grimm**, 75, of Greenwood, S.C. He was a Navy corpsman who served in Vietnam with 3rd Bn, 5th Marines, 1stMarDiv.

**Wayne N. Hill Sr.**, 71, of East Moline, Ill. He served in the Marine Corps and then later worked in law enforcement.

**Ora A. Huth**, 100, of San Francisco, Calif. She served from 1947-1956 in Arlington, Va. Later in life, she was involved in local government issues.

**1stSgt Stanley H. Jordan Jr.**, 92, of Hamilton, Ohio. During his 30 years in the Marine Corps, he served in the Korean War and was later assigned to recruiting duty.

**Maj Oliver J. "Big Dad" Kaneft Jr.**, 93, of Columbia, S.C. He attended the University of South Carolina on an athletic scholarship. He completed naval flight training in 1951 and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. During the Korean War he was an attack aircraft pilot and a forward air controller.

**Robert C. "Bob" Kaster**, 89, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted after graduating

## LEGACIES

### *Colonel James A. Blakely Jr., 1922-2017*

Colonel James A. "Jim" Blakely Jr. retired in 1973 after an exemplary 31-year career in the Marine Corps. He enlisted in March 1942 just before finishing his senior year of college at Holy Cross. Jim completed boot camp, Officer Candidate School, and communications training courses before joining the 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines in the Pacific as they were coming out of Bougainville.

He was the battalion communications officer at Guam and Iwo Jima. He was a second lieutenant during the recapture of Guam when circumstances unexpectedly elevated him to battalion commander. This was a short-lived but weighty assignment at a young age. Although the island had been declared secured after hard fighting, several thousand Japanese troops remained, and conflict continued. He always emphasized that his brief tenure in command ended as soon as someone more experienced was available.

One of his worst experiences in World War II occurred as the battalion was moving to enter Agana, Guam's capital. Jim was near a jeep that struck a land mine. The jeep carried the battalion XO and a lieutenant, his friend and former tentmate. Both were killed and two other Marines were seriously injured. Despite not knowing if there were other mines, he rushed to carry the wounded men, one by one, to safer ground for medical aid.

Twenty percent of Jim's service was dedicated to wartime overseas tours. He served two years in the Pacific during World War II, two combat tours in Korea, and two tours with the 1st Marine Air Wing, as communications electronics officer and chief of staff, in the Vietnam Era. He also commanded the Marine Corps Communications Electronics Schools for four years.

Jim Blakely was a proud, tough Marine, and a loving family man. He died at age 95 years in Chula Vista, Calif., on May 31, 2017.

— Jack Peterson



*Colonel James A. Blakely Jr.*

from high school and served at MCB Camp Pendleton. He participated in Operation Teapot, which included several atomic detonations and was intended to test nuclear devices for possible inclusion in the U.S. weapons arsenal.

**Allen “Gunner” Kent**, 80, of Kansas City, Mo. During his 24-year Marine Corps career, he completed a tour in Vietnam and participated in Operation Frequent Wind in 1975. He also served as a DI and completed a tour on recruiting duty. His awards include a Bronze Star with combat “V” and the Navy Commendation Medal. In 1994 he was the VFW National Commander and later served as the organization’s adjutant general.

**Maj Edmund A. Nelson**, 101, of Timonium, Md. He was a pilot in the Pacific during WW II. After the war, he was a Marine Corps Reserve pilot with VMFA-321. He had a successful career in business, retiring as vice president of Steeltin Can Corp. after nearly 30 years with the company.

**Cpl Marjorie (Cunningham) Reedy**, 98, of Fairfield, Pa. She enlisted during WW II and was discharged in 1946. She was a member of the MCL and American Legion.

**Howard L. Schmidt**, 91, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted in the Marine Corps

Reserve while he was still in high school. In 1951, his unit was activated and sent to Korea. After the war, he returned to his hometown and began a 42-year career as a field engineer with the National Cash Register Co.

**Bernard Shaw**, 82, in Washington, D.C. For many years he was a household name and presence on TV as the chief anchor at CNN, starting with the 24-hour news network when it launched in 1980. Before beginning his career in journalism, he served in the Marine Corps from 1959-1963.

**SSgt Conway “Jim” Spurlock**, 91, of Fairfield, Ohio. He served from 1949-1951.

**Col Mary L. Stremlow**, 88, of Lake View, N.Y. She was commissioned in 1955 after graduating from Buffalo State Teachers College. During her career, she was XO in a women’s recruit training battalion at Parris Island and an instructor at various Marine Corps schools. She wrote several books about women in the Corps, including: “A History of the Women Marines, 1946-1977,” “Free a Marine to Fight: Women Marines in World War II,” and “Coping With Sexism in the Military.”

**Terris “Terry” Umentum**, 76, of Oconto Falls, Wis. He enlisted in 1965 and served a tour in Vietnam at Da Nang.

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

*Leatherneck* introduces LEGACIES—a quarterly special section commemorating Marines and other servicemembers. LEGACIES provides a venue in which individuals can celebrate and recognize the lives of their loved ones by sharing their Marine Corps stories with other Marines, friends and loved ones for a small fee. *Leatherneck* will continue to run obituaries at no charge, but for those who want to further memorialize their loved one or themselves, LEGACIES is here to share those memories. Debuting in our May 2022 issue, this paid feature will run quarterly in *Leatherneck*.

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## SOUND OFF

[continued from page 7]

bill payments, taxi stand and other such needs. Highway 1 was where many Quantico Marines would travel to Washington, D.C., for their liberty. Saturday nights were considered dance night at the base enlisted men's club. The base would have three or four buses go to Washington, D.C., and load the buses with women who wanted to attend the dances.

The school demonstration unit had two special Marines. One Marine NCO was the brother of Marilyn Baker, later known as the Hollywood star Marilyn Monroe. The second NCO was Corporal John R. Brown, who in 1957 played in Warner Brothers movie, "The D.I." with actor Jack Webb. John Brown played Sergeant O'Neill, a junior D.I. with recruit platoon.

This 87-year-old cannot imagine or comprehend all the changes that have taken place over these years. I would like to see *Leatherneck* do a story for their readers viewing all the changes.

Cpl John Messia Jr., USMCR (Ret)  
1952 to 1954  
Brockton, Mass.



Wesley L. Roscoe is looking for any information on 4th A Battery. (Photo courtesy of Wesley L. Roscoe)

### 4th A Battery Identification

I am hoping someone can give me any information on 4th A Battery of Madison, Wis. I saw the license plate attachment (above) and have wondered about this unit. I have tried to get information for the Reserve Unit in Madison, Wis., and New Orleans, La., but have not been successful. The Reserve unit was formed in 1922 so this unit preceded them.

The photo above I believe to be at least 100 years old. Does anyone have any information on 4th A Battery?

Wesley L. Roscoe  
Madison, Wis.

### Gil Hodges Article Brought Back Memories

The October article "Gil Hodges Enshrined in Baseball Hall of Fame" triggered many memories. I grew up in The Bronx during the 1950s, and my dad, a firefighter, often had weekdays off. We went to the Polo Grounds, Ebbets Field and Yankee Stadium.

I was fortunate to see Hodges, Alvin Dark and another World War II Marine, Hank Bauer of the New York Yankees, play many times. Bauer served with the 4th Raider Bn and the 4th Marines. He was in combat in the Pacific theater and



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received two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts. In later years, I also saw Marines Tom Seaver and Tug McGraw play for the Mets.

I was still on active duty when the Miracle Mets won the 1969 World Series, and I did get to a couple of games when home on liberty weekends.

What was really special for me was the memory of times shared with my dad and my late first wife, Mary Ellen, who was tolerant of my passion for sports, at least until the kids began to arrive.

Sgt Joe Doyle  
USMC, 1964-1970  
Scottsburg, Va.


### Thank You to Sara Bock

Just a short note here to say thank you to *Leatherneck* and Sara Bock for all of the hard work that goes into *Leatherneck* magazine each month. I also wanted to especially say good luck to Sara with her moving on. Sara is the best!

Gene T. Spanos  
Park Ridge, Ill.

### Camp Lejeune Water Contamination

Now that the contaminated water issue at Camp Lejeune has been addressed, what steps have been implemented to do monthly water testing at all Department



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**ADM John S. McCain II, sitting on an ammo box smoking a cigar, visited 3/5 in Vietnam, January 1969.**

of Defense installations? It would be nice to have base commanders ensure that all fresh water for everyone on base have clean fresh water.

Was Camp Lejeune the only base with contaminated water? If so, I'm glad action has started to help and correct a wrong that slipped through a crack. I do believe all Navy ships test potable water on a regular basis. A story on today's base water testing and field testing would be nice.

John Sanchez  
USN, 1961-1966  
Hanford, Calif.



COURTESY OF GEORGE R. MACCLAY

**ADM John S. McCain II**

ADM John S. McCain II, Commander in Chief, Pacific Command, visited 3rd Bn, 5th Marines during Operation Taylor Common, January 1969. ADM McCain

visited Vietnam every holiday season during his tour in order to be as close as he could to his son, LCDR John McCain III, a Navy pilot who had been shot down

in 1967 and who was a POW in the "Hanoi Hilton."

George R. MacClay  
Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.



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

# Are You Ready?



**Mike & Kay Ross**  
Albert E. Shockey Detachment #960  
Kokomo, Indiana



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## Reunions

• **Marine Corps Disbursing Assn.**, May 21-25, 2023, Louisville, Ky. Contact MGySgt Kevin Gascon, USMC (Ret), (760) 458-2655, usmcdisbursers@hotmail.com, www.usmcdisbursers.com.

• **11th Marine Regiment, OIF (20th anniversary)**, Mar. 31-Apr. 1, 2023, Camp Pendleton, Ca. Contact Casey Harsh, casey.harsh@gmail.com. Facebook group: The Cannon Cockers of OIF-1 (20-Year Reunion 2023 Group).

• **Co A, 3rd Engineer Bn/BLT 1/9 (RVN, 1970-1971)**, is planning a reunion. Contact Gene Spanos, (847) 532-2963, genethemarine@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Co D, 4-73**, June 15-18, 2023, Arlington, Va. Contact Col Bill Anderson, USMCR (Ret), (540) 850-4213, binche57@yahoo.com, or Col Bob Donaghue, USMCR (Ret), (617) 840-0267, ip350haven@comcast.net.

• **Plt 2064, San Diego, 1965**, is planning a reunion. Contact Gary A. Gruenwald, (434) 609-3433, usmcgman74@aol.com.

• **Hotel Co, 2/7 (RVN 1965-1970)**, June 8-11, 2023, Oklahoma City, Ok. Contact Jerry Norris, (940) 631-7233, postalm16@hotmail.com.


• **TBS Class 3-67/41st OCC**, Oct. 26-29, 2023, Arlington, Va. Contact Paul Disario, (559) 273-9549, pdisario@comcast.net.

## Mail Call

• Leonard A. Gravel would like to hear from **Larry Shupe**. Contact via text, (252) 717-3728, or email, lengravel@hotmail.com.



• Chris Marie Anton wants to hear from **anyone who served with her mother, Celia Darlene Barnes**, from 1968 to 1970. Contact via text, (808) 940-4363, or email, lionhearmama49@gmail.com.

• Michael Kuhn would like to hear from anyone in his **boot camp Platoon 1083, graduated Nov. 11, 1977, from MCRD San Diego**. Contact via text, (771) 744-8459, or email, mkuhn6429@gmail.com.



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## Wanted

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

• Bill R. Sowders Sr., (260) 482-2872, wants **both of the Recruit Graduation Books for Plt 1003 and Plt 2003** at Parris Island, S.C., for Feb. 4, 1965.

• Paul Burr, pl.burr@comcast.net, is **seeking law enforcement, fire and military patches, both foreign and domestic** for his collection.

• Paul Gray, psgray52@outlook.com, wants a copy of **the platoon book for Platoon 2136 from MCRD San Diego in 1970**.

• Tom Holm, (520) 297-2936, holm@

email.arizona.edu, **working on a biography of Ira Hayes and is seeking any kind of photographs associated with him.**

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 leatherneck@mca-marines.org, or write to Reader Assistance Editor, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134. 🇺🇸



# Saved Round

By Nancy S. Lichtman



COURTESY OF TOYS FOR TOTS

Chad Everett, 1972



COURTESY OF TOYS FOR TOTS

Doris Day, 1954



COURTESY OF TOYS FOR TOTS

Tina Louise, early 1960s

**TINSELTOWN FOR TOTS**—Since its founding in 1947, Toys for Tots has had the backing of many of Hollywood's brightest stars. To celebrate the charity's 75th anniversary, here are a few Toys for Tots promotional photos from years past featuring the major actors and actresses of the day. For more about Toys for Tots, see page 36. 🐾



COURTESY OF TOYS FOR TOTS

Natalie Wood, 1969



COURTESY OF TOYS FOR TOTS

Angie Dickinson, 1970s



COURTESY OF TOYS FOR TOTS

Alan Ladd, 1954

# CAMP LEJEUNE JUSTICE ACT OF 2022



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