

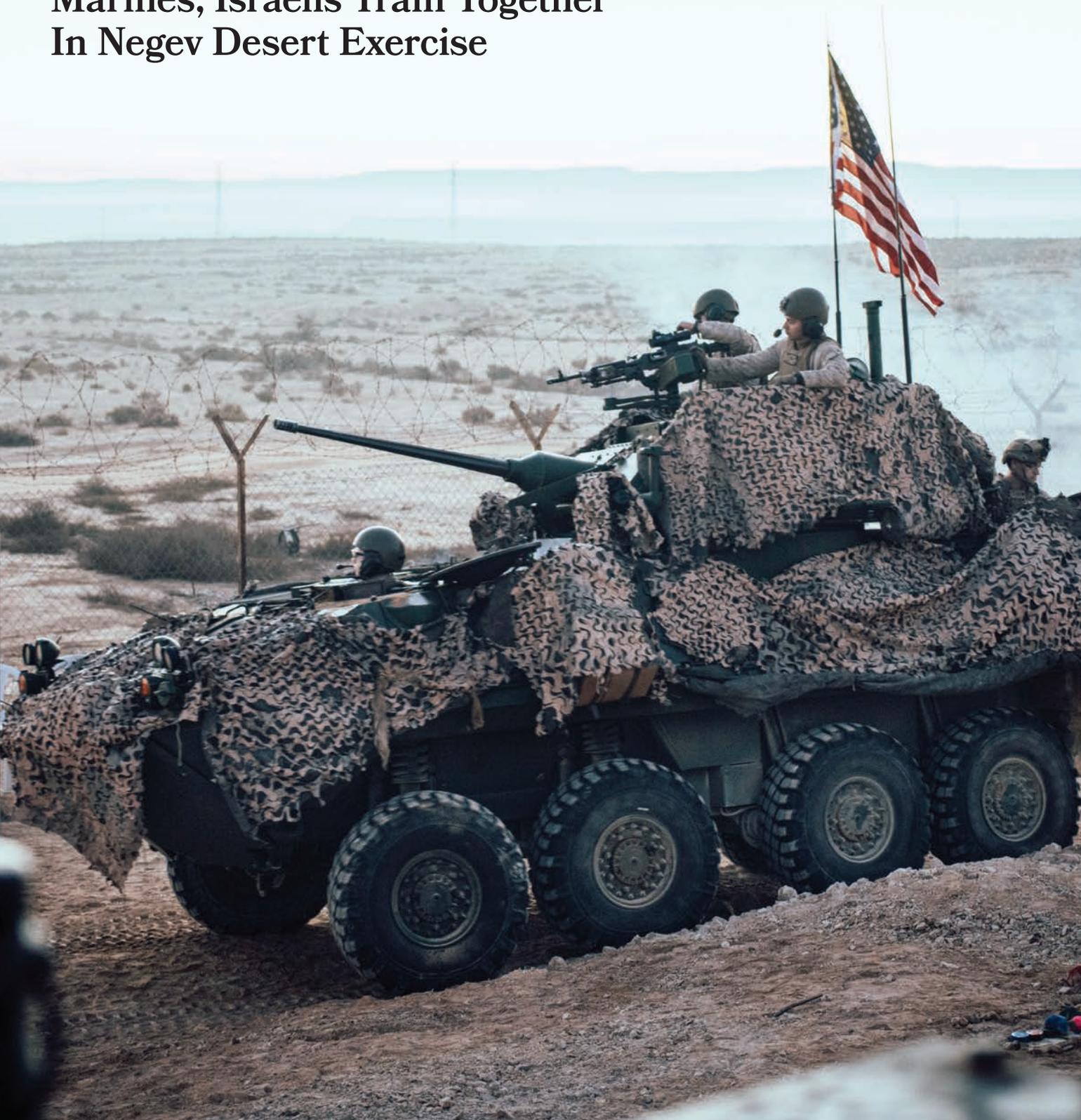
JANUARY 2022

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LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

Stability in the Region—
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In Negev Desert Exercise



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JANUARY 2022
VOL. 105, No. 1

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By Sara W. Bock

As they met for the last time in Fredericksburg, Va., in September 2021, World War II veterans of the 6thMarDiv were granted closure with the arrival of their Division flag and a long-lost bottle of Scotch whisky they'd saved "for the last man."

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J. Edgar Hoover's thoughts about veterans' transition back into civilian life after World War II is just as applicable to today's servicemembers as it was in 1946, when it was first published.

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By Dr. Barry Erdman

As a young Marine, Barry Erdman landed on Adak Island in 1979 at the age of 17. More than 40 years later after a distinguished medical career, Dr. Erdman recently visited his former duty station and shared his reminiscences.

COVER: Marines assigned to Light Armored Reconnaissance Company, Battalion Landing Team 1/1, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, drive a light armored vehicle out of the camp motor pool during an exercise at Bishlah Training Center, in Israel, Nov. 4, 2021. To read more about the exercise, see *In Every Clime and Place* on page 8. Photo by SSgt Donald Holbert, USMC. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$2 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.

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Letter of the Month

(Leatherneck will pay \$25 for a "Sound Off Letter of the Month" submitted by an MCA member or provide a one-year courtesy subscription to a non-member whose letter is selected.)

This is a note to Afghanistan veterans from a World War II and Korean War vet (enlisted Sailor from July 1, 1943, to Dec. 31, 1945, and officer from July 1, 1951, to June 31, 1953).

You did not fight in vain, lose buddies in vain, lose blood and body parts in vain. As I did, you went where and when you were ordered, did what you were ordered to do which was to facilitate a well-thought-out plan to return the Kabul government to some sort of stability after years of the Taliban messing around. Yes, grieve for the 2,000 [servicemembers] who didn't come home. I'm still grieving for Ed Heron, Stan Larson, Otto Terrebesy, Stan Jurgalonis, and many other friends who left home with me but never returned. Don't ever think that your service or of

those 2,000 [servicemembers] was in vain.

Looking at it from a different angle—you carried out orders from your country, doing what its leaders in foreign policy considered right at the time. Don't even think, much less ask, "Was it right?" You can't do that. You don't do that with personal decisions. Don't do it now with state decisions. Whether they look right or wrong now is irrelevant.

Granted it's easier for me to say this because we beat the Japanese and Axis in WW II and kept the South Koreans from joining North Korea in what is now a totally failed communist state. But the principle remains the same—be proud that you served your country in what now appears to be a failed attempt to save a whole population from a harsh, cruel, regressive rule.

LTJ. Birney Dibble, MC, USNR (Ret)
Eau Claire, Wis.

True Meaning of Semper Fidelis

That was a wonderful and inspiring story "The True Meaning of Semper

Fidelis: A Surgeon's Journey to Heal Wounded Marines" of a family's sacrifice and service to our country and Corps. To lose one's son in combat and then for the father to become a Navy doctor in a combat zone demonstrates outstanding character for the Krissoff family. And let's recognize Dr. Krissoff's wife, Christine, who managed the family affairs while husband and sons were off defending our nation. Oorah!

Capt Doug Caldwell
USMC, 1965-1979
Plano, Texas

Devil Dog Enjoys Leatherneck

I just read my digital *Leatherneck* of the November issue. The staff of *Leatherneck* does a phenomenal job of featuring articles from every clime and place for us old Devil Dogs to enjoy. I hope many others show their appreciation every month. Thank you for including my letter, "Sea Story Had Me Digging Into My Past," [Sound Off] about our Marine postal unit in Saudi Arabia and showing

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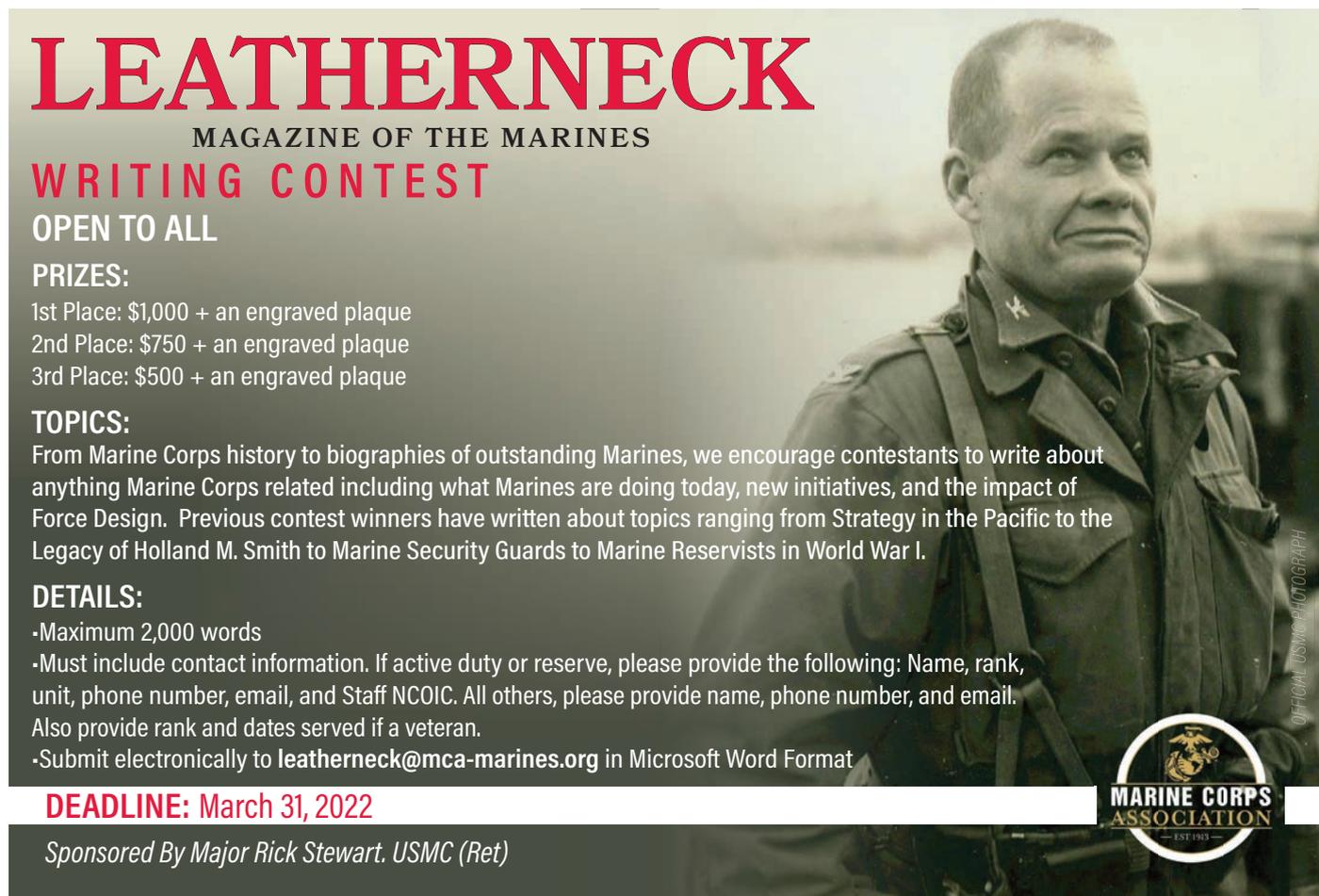
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ADVERTISING QUERIES:

Defense Related Industries/Business:

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advertising@mca-marines.org 703-640-0169

All Other Advertising Contact:

James G. Elliott Co. Inc.

New York: (212) 588-9200

Chicago: (312) 236-4900

Los Angeles: (213) 624-0900

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TELEPHONE EXTENSIONS

Editorial Offices: 115 • Business Office: 121

MEMBER SERVICES

Phone: toll-free (866) 622-1775

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LEATHERNECK AND MCA MEMBERSHIP PRICES

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POSTMASTER

Send address changes to: *Leatherneck* Magazine, Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134.



Leatherneck (ISSN 0023-981X) is published monthly by the Marine Corps Association, Bldg. #715, MCB, Quantico, VA 22134. Copyright 2022 by MCA.

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the photo with the messages from my fellow postal Marines. I really enjoyed it. I hope my postal officers see it and realize how appreciated they were for their tireless work.

GySgt Larry D. Williams, USMC (Ret)
Yuma, Ariz.

November Article Had Me Reaching for My Yearbook

I just finished reading the article, "In The Arena: A Memoir of Love, War, and Politics" in the November *Leatherneck* by Chuck Robb and looked up my Med cruise, Battalion Landing Team 2/2, June 1965 to November 1965 yearbook. There I found the executive officer of Co H was a Captain C.S. Robb, I believe to be the same individual. I did not know the captain as I was in G/2/2. Small world and small Marine Corps.

Sgt Mike Skorich
USMC, 1963-1966
Leesburg, Fla.

Readers Weigh in on M16

This letter is in response to the excellent article, "This is My Rifle," by Mr. Sam Lichtman in the October issue. In 1969, the 1stMarDiv band's defensive line covered about 500 yards at the top of a hill overlooking the 1stMarDiv headquarters near Da Nang. One afternoon Sergeant Ken Williams took his squad to see if any bad guys were lurking in the tall grass about 100 yards in front of our line. They were in an ambush position. When fired upon, our squad returned fire immediately. Shortly thereafter, Sgt Williams' M16 jammed, and he ducked behind a large boulder to clear his weapon. At that second, a grenade exploded at the exact spot Sgt Williams had been standing, with only a small piece of shrapnel grazing his left arm. Sgt Williams, upon directing his squad to lay down a base of fire in the direction of the ambush, began guiding his men back to our defensive line walking backward and spraying the area with gunfire as they went. The squad successfully joined our defensive line without any further injuries. A few blood trails later revealed the enemy had not had the good fortune our squad had had.

As a few Marines and soldiers were tragically killed because of the early malfunctioning M16s, this was unique in that this time the jam saved it's Marine. What are the odds?

Capt Jesse Sunderland, USMC (Ret)
Jasper, Mo.

While I realize the M16 is an outstanding weapon, I will always hate it. On Sept. 10, 1967, I was a corpsman with "Hotel" Co,

2nd Bn, 5th Marines during Operation Swift in Que Son Valley. I was with the reinforced platoon that was dispatched to recon away from the main body of the company. We were caught in a small rice paddy by a People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) force in a bunker complex and endured some of the heaviest fire I ever experienced as an FMF corpsman. We were pinned down for several hours under fire and close air support. Most of our M16s jammed. We lost nine Marines that day with many wounded. As a corpsman I cannot conclude that the losses were a direct result of the failure of the M16. However, I can state that every Marine who died had a jammed M16 and was attempting to clear. Most of the wounded experienced jams as well. Essentially, we could not return fire until the remainder of the company and Mike Co, 3/5, came to our rescue.

HM2 Dennis L. Noah, USN
Baltimore, Md.

This letter is in response to the article, "This is My Rifle" in the October issue. I was a machine gunner, 0331, with H/3/1 during the Korean War. Our platoon had six M1919 A4 guns. They were designed by John Browning, air-cooled, and fired the .30-'06, an extremely effective round. As a machine gunner, I also carried an M1911 .45, another great weapon shooting a very effective cartridge. Both weapons served superbly in the Second World War and Korea.

Personally, I never experienced a stoppage or malfunction of any kind on my M1919 A4 and I put literally thousands of rounds downrange. I should also point out that the "Ma Deuce" and M1919 A4 are cousins, both Browning designs. One is just bigger and badder than the other, and the Ma Deuce is still being effectively used today. I believe newer is not better. I have never seen the point of change for the sake of change. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." I fear that far too many decisions are political and made by too many staff officers who have never heard a shot fired in anger. If I had it to do over again, I would. Just keep your plastic fantasies and poodle shooters. I'll stick with my old outdated M1919 A4 and my M1911; two battle weapons that have proven their place in history.

Sgt C.C. Westlake, USMC (Ret)
Bozeman, Mont.

New Look Gets Stamp of Approval

I noticed the different look on the cover of the October *Leatherneck* and write here to say that the red stripe across the masthead of the cover page reminded me of the blood stripe on our blues and of the

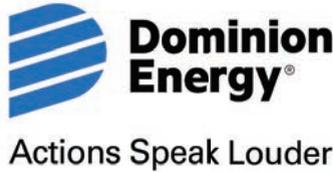


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11 Marines, the corpsman, and the soldier who died on Aug. 26, 2021, in Kabul, Afghanistan. Let us always remember the sacrifices made in blood for America and for the Marines we fought alongside. It's an impressive new and different

change to the cover and continues the importance of tradition in our *Leatherneck* magazine. Saved Round writer, Nancy Lichtman, included pictures of earlier *Leatherneck* covers where changes had been introduced as far back as 1921. Congratulations on your newest cover change and on your past and continued efforts to keep *Leatherneck* modern looking.

SgtMaj John Harlow, USMC (Ret)
Dillon, S.C.

Once a Marine, Always a Marine

As a Marine veteran of the Korean Conflict, I have been attending the veterans holiday luncheons with my wife at the West Bridgewater Council-Aging located in Massachusetts. For the past four years on Veterans Day, we welcomed Howard Elementary School's fourth and fifth grade students along with the staff who have been coming to the luncheons to honor all attending veterans and to entertain them with various patriotic songs, along with each military branch hymn. It was requested that each veteran stand to receive a carnation from each student for their dedicated service to our country. When the students sang "The Marines' Hymn," I was reminiscing back to 64 years ago about a young lad who

had decided to take the Marine challenge. On Dec. 19, 1952, at Parris Island, S.C. I graduated with my honor platoon (541), 1st Bn, and was awarded my collar pins of the eagle, globe and anchor. I was very proud and fortunate to be a member of the Marine brotherhood and have the title "Marine."

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

Much More to the Eagle, Globe And Anchor Insignia

I read with interest the article compiled by Jacqueline Jedrych entitled, "The Eagle, Globe and Anchor: Representing the Marines." However, there is much more involved in this insignia which consists of five, perhaps historically, six major segments, consisting of:

The eagle represents the power, the want for freedom imposed upon an oppressive government in severing ties previously binding two peoples together under one rule. The eagle is a symbol of freedom and new law. The eagle, holding in its beak the line, symbolizes a new source of authority, the Constitution of the United States of America.

The globe symbolizes the region in which this authority shall reside.

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WHERE THINGS START TO GET BETTER.

The foul anchor represents the severing of former ties, especially through its rejection of the vertical anchor symbolizing monarchical rule, supplanting that symbol with an anchor resting 30 degrees on its side.

The flukes of the anchor intersecting with the Globe make a historical reference to an area of early primary importance to the Navy and Marine Corps of the United States.

The severed line, completely wrapped around the detached anchor, represents unequivocally independence.

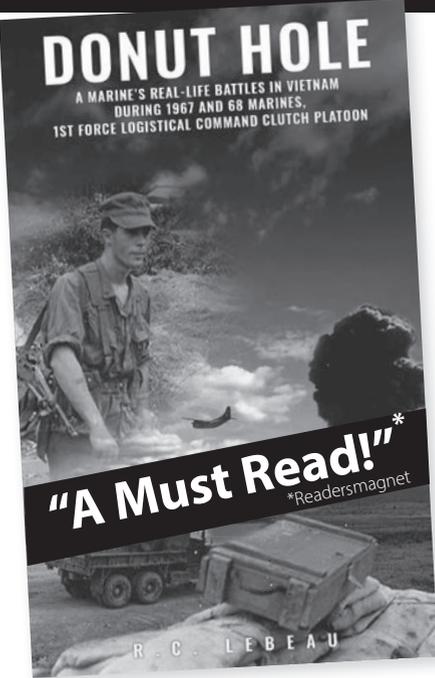
The pennant with the motto, Semper Fidelis, clearly states to whom the persons wearing the insignia of the USMC are faithful to. Faithfulness to the new sovereign has supplanted the old.

The sovereign is denoted within the preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America as the "People of the United States of America."

Viewed as separate components the message contained within the insignia of the United States Marine Corps can easily be missed. But not if this studied opinion proves correct.

Tom Gregory
Honeoye, N.Y.

[continued on page 70]



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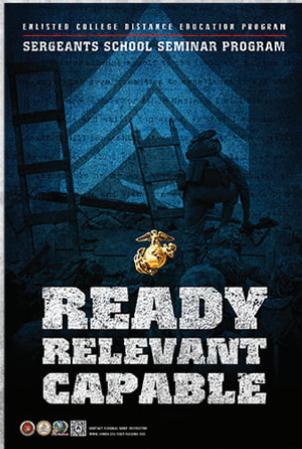
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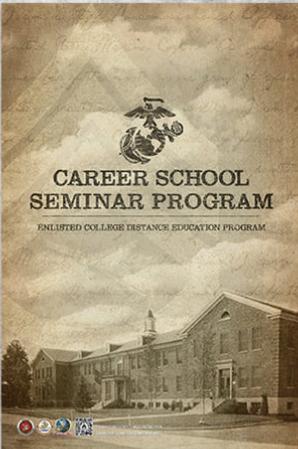
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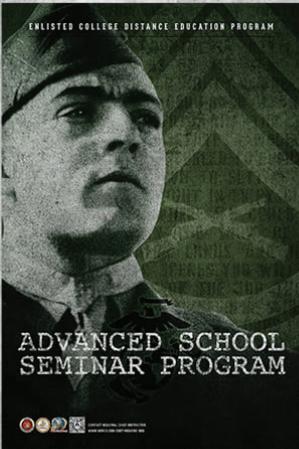
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In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

KABUL, AFGHANISTAN “Jack of All Trades”: MWSS Marines Support Evacuation Operations

In October 2021, the Marine Wing Support Squadron (MWSS) 373 “Aces” returned from a six-month deployment to the Middle East in support of Special Purpose Marine Air-Ground Task Force—Crisis Response-Central Command.

Six months earlier, MWSS-373 deployed to Kuwait, where they initiated ground support operations throughout the region. For more than four months, the Marines of MWSS-373 rebuilt airfield infrastructure in Syria and Iraq, refueled aircraft in

Saudi Arabia, provided communication and supply capabilities to the air command element, and supported ground logistics movement and sustainment of the air, ground and logistics command elements.

“We are the jack of all trades,” said Major Sophie Funderburk, SPMAGTF—CR-CC Marine Wing Support Detachment commander. “More than 20 military occupational specialties compose our detachment, which means that you get over 20 different capabilities to employ within a variety of mission sets across the MAGTF [Marine air-ground task force].”

In mid-August, MWSS-373 Marines

responded to growing civil unrest in Kabul, Afghanistan, by augmenting the Marines who rapidly responded with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit in support of noncombatant evacuation operations at Hamid Karzai International Airport. Noncombatant evacuation operations serve as the primary method employed by the U.S. State Department to safely evacuate American citizens and host country nationals from crisis situations in foreign countries. Prior to their arrival in Afghanistan, MWSS-373 underwent process-focused training as part of the evacuation control center (ECC), the mission of which is to restore order in an area of instability resulting from hostility or humanitarian disaster. Despite an incredible amount of situational uncertainty, a shortage of mission-essential equipment, and the growing population of evacuees overflowing at the airport, MWSS-373 Marines were prepared to operate outside the parameters of their job description and original mission in the Middle East in order to accomplish their new mission in Kabul.

“Our Marines are problem solvers who find ways to do things in less-than-ideal circumstances with less than adequately staffed resources,” said Captain Jacob Schiltz, SPMAGTF—CR-CC Marine Wing Support Detachment operations officer. “You may not have everything you need, but you figure out a way to get the job done.”

By the time MWSS-373 arrived at the airport, an estimated 10,000 individuals were overrunning it, a number that was increasing by the hour. The overcrowding made any sort of vetting process nearly impossible for a growing population of desperate and scared evacuees. As part of the ECC, Marines quickly learned that in order to assist evacuees and accomplish their mission, the human factor of the situation needed to be addressed.

MWSS-373 took initial action by implementing crowd control tactics to quell riotous and unruly behavior, setting the stage for construction of canalizing terrain amidst the holding sites. Serpentine structures were built using broken-down buses and military-grade pallets, allowing Marines to more effectively communicate with and supervise evacuees. Female Marines acted as the first line of defense for women and children seeking transportation through Kabul, conducting searches for weapons and hazardous



SGT SAMUEL RUIZ, USMC

A Marine with SPMAGTF—CR-CC lifts an evacuee at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 26, 2021. Among the units supporting the noncombatant evacuation operations was MWSS-373, a detachment made up of Marines from more than 20 different military occupational specialties.



SGT SAMUEL RUIZ, USMC

A Marine with SPMAGTF-CR-CC gives a “high five” to a child at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 26, 2021.

materials, and tending to unaccompanied children at the holding site. Follow-on efforts included hotwiring abandoned vehicles and construction equipment in order to provide critical logistical support at the airport, namely transporting large obstacles and digging sanitation trenches. MWSS-373 Marines further utilized a variety of acquired vehicles to transport portable restrooms and handwashing stations across heavily contested terrain to build sanitation sites for the evacuees to utilize prior to transportation out of Afghanistan.

“The problem-solving abilities of the young Marines and our Sailors won the day,” said Maj Funderburk. “The only reason our mission in Afghanistan was a success was because of our Marines.”

1stLt Wesley Medeiros, USMC

SANTA ANA, PHILIPPINES **U.S., Philippine Marines Collaborate For International Security**

U.S. Marines and Sailors representing 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, took part in the first-ever coastal defense exercise held in Cagayan province, Philippines, as part of the fifth iteration of Exercise Kamandag, Sept. 28-Oct. 8, 2021.

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, the U.S. and Philippine Marine Corps, along with Japanese Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade, continued the annual exercise

with appropriate precautions, demonstrating multilateral commitment to mutual defense and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

“We must be able to outmaneuver our enemies in the same way that we shall be able to maneuver this virus and still be able to continue to train,” said Major General Ariel Caculitan, Commandant of the Philippine Marine Corps. “We have a

big responsibility in terms of defense and security of our people and our nations.”

The training in the Philippines included bilateral subject matter expert exchanges, virtually in Palawan, and in northern Luzon in-person. These exchanges focused on coastal defense and counterterrorism as well as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

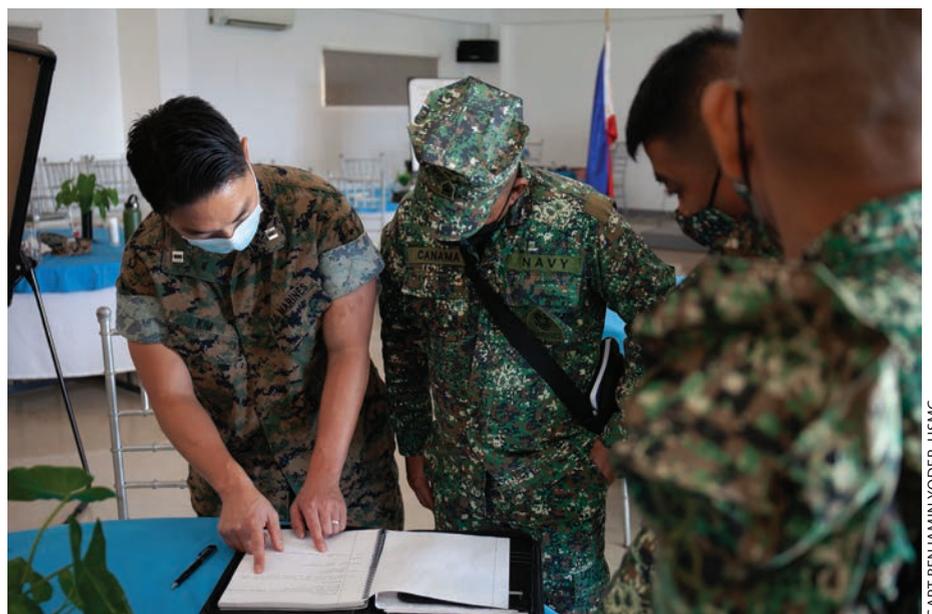
“We always engage with our U.S. counterparts in training to learn from their armed forces and have camaraderie with them,” said Major Jonathan Panganiban, the operations officer for Marine Battalion Landing Team-10, Philippine Marine Corps. “The objective of this interoperability event is to help develop each Marine to be more proficient in their respective skill set, especially in regards to our coastal defense capability.”

The subject matter expert exchange in Santa Ana culminated in a tactical exercise where U.S. and Philippine Marines practiced bilateral planning for coastal defense and contingency operations based on a scenario provided by the Philippine Marine Corps.

Captain Shane Kim, logistics officer for Headquarters Battalion, 3rdMarDiv, was deployed to the Philippines with the exercise force.

“Our partnerships with both the Philippines and Japan are crucial in this area of operations, so the opportunity to increase our interoperability with these partners as part of a multilateral exercise both here in the Philippines and in Japan improves our ability to integrate forces rapidly and respond to crisis anywhere in the region.”

Capt Benjamin Yoder, USMC



CAPT BENJAMIN YODER, USMC

A Marine captain with 3rdMarDiv and Philippine Marines from Marine Battalion Landing Team-10 and the Philippine Marine Corps’ Coastal Defense Regiment participate in a tactical exercise during Exercise Kamandag in Santa Ana, Philippines, Oct. 1, 2021.

ISRAEL

U.S., Israeli Forces Partner for Interoperability Exercise

The Israeli Defense Force and U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) conducted a bilateral amphibious exercise in Israel, beginning Nov. 1, 2021. The event marked the U.S. and Israel's first bilateral training since Israel was added to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

The exercise included military operations on urban terrain, infantry live-fire training, High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) live fire and rapid maneuvering training, as well as professional exchanges on various topics including engineering, medical and explosive ordnance disposal.

"This exercise is part of the next chapter in the U.S. Navy's and Marine Corps' longstanding relationship with Israel that is so vital to stability and security in the region," said Brigadier General Farrell Sullivan, the commanding general of NAVCENT Task Force 51/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

Participating U.S. forces included approximately 500 individuals from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, including one logistics battalion detachment, one infantry rifle company, a light armored reconnaissance company and a HIMARS platoon.

The U.S. 5th Fleet area of operations



SSGT DONALD HOLBERT, USMC

Cpl Javier Nunez, an LAV-25 gunner assigned to Light Armored Reconnaissance Company, Battalion Landing Team 1/1 adjusts a boresight on the main gun of an LAV-25 during a battlesight zero range in support of an Israeli interoperability exercise at Bislah Training Center, Israel, Nov. 3, 2021.

encompasses nearly 2.5 million square miles of water area and includes the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea, parts of the Indian Ocean and three critical choke points at the Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal and the Strait of Bab-al-Mandeb. With Israel's addition, the AOR is now comprised of 21 countries.

SSgt Victor Mancilla, USMC



LCPL PATRICK KATZ, USMC

While training with Israeli forces at Bislah Training Center, Israel, Nov. 2, 2021, 1stLt Thomas Williams, a platoon commander assigned to "Alpha" Company, BLT 1/1, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, describes the scheme of maneuver using a terrain model.

Marines assigned to the 11th MEU drive light armored vehicles to a firing line at Bislah Training Center, Israel, Nov. 3, 2021. The exercise marked the first bilateral training event for the U.S. and Israel since Israel was added to the CENTCOM area of responsibility and is a robust demonstration of both nations' commitment to stability in the region.



SSGT DONALD HOLBERT, USMC



SSGT DONALD HOLBERT, USMC

Marines assigned to Light Armored Reconnaissance Company, BLT 1/1, 11th MEU, conduct a dry-fire rehearsal of a live-fire and maneuver range during an interoperability exercise at Bislah Training Center, Israel, Nov. 4, 2021.

ARABIAN SEA

Cross-Deck Ops Demonstrate Naval Partnerships in Action

Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 211 cross-decked F-35B Lightning II aircraft from HMS *Queen Elizabeth* to the amphibious assault ship USS *Essex* (LHD-2), Nov. 8, 2021. The mission marked the second time the U.S. has cross-decked the F-35B from a foreign aircraft carrier, utilizing U.S. ships and an intermediate refueling point during the mission and demonstrating naval partnerships in action.

U.S. Marines were transported by a Royal Navy Merlin MK IV to *Essex* to recover and refuel the F-35Bs before launching them on mission ultimately to return to *Queen Elizabeth*. This evolution demonstrated the strategic importance of F-35-capable allied carriers, as well as the interoperability the F-35B facilitates.

“The fact the U.S. and the U.K. can operate their 5th-generation jets and other aircraft from the same deck at the same time is a huge strategic advantage for both countries,” said Royal Navy Commodore Steve Moorhouse, commander of the U.K. Carrier Strike Group (CSG). “It is a compliment that the U.S. is comfortable with the U.K. CSG commanding the largest U.S. 5th-generation air wing afloat today.”

Simultaneously, aircraft attached to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 165 (Reinforced), 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit, landed on *Queen Elizabeth*, demonstrating increased

interoperability, information sharing and expanded access across the region as allies

In the months prior to the cross-deck operations, the U.S. Marine Corps also landed F-35Bs on the Italian aircraft carrier ITS *Cavour* (CVH-550), and, at the request of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA) 242 conducted the first-ever landing of F-35B Lightning II aircraft aboard the Japanese ship *Izumo*.

“The evolution underscored our continued effort to shift away from static, built-up airfields towards Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO),” said Brigadier General Simon Doran, USMC, U.S. Senior National Representative to the U.K. CSG. “Doing so as part of the United Kingdom Carrier Strike Group 21 strengthens our alliances and partnerships through the development of interoperable capabilities, combined operations, theater security cooperation and capacity-building efforts.”

DMO calls for U.S. Naval Forces to operate in a less concentrated, more distributed manner to complicate an adversary’s ability to find, track and target them while still delivering decisive combat power where needed. The dual-carrier operation extends the reach of the F-35B, increasing the aircraft’s range, flight time and ordnance capacity.

In planning guidance released to the fleet, the Commandant of the Marine Corps highlighted that the Marine Corps is a naval expeditionary force capable of deterring malign behavior and, when

necessary, fighting inside our adversary’s sensors and weapons engagement zone to facilitate sea denial in support of fleet operations and joint force horizontal escalation. VMFA-211’s F-35B short takeoff and vertical landing capabilities make them uniquely qualified to support distributed maritime operations, capable of operating from *Queen Elizabeth*-class aircraft carriers and landing helicopter dock ships.

For Major Brian Kimmins, USMC, the VMFA-211 executive officer, the mission marked a return to *Essex*, where he had previously deployed as the 13th MEU Assistant Air Officer. Now an F-35B pilot, Kimmins landed aboard *Essex* in a Royal Navy helicopter to serve as an F-35B landing signals officer, where he is responsible for controlling the safe launch and recovery of F-35Bs aboard ship.

“Having deployed as part of the 13th MEU aboard the *Essex*, I appreciated the opportunity once again to work with the Marines and Sailors of the *Essex*,” said Kimmins. “Being at the forefront of putting the concept of advanced sea-basing into practice only further highlights our flexibility as a warfighting organization.”

The success of this mission and the CSG-21 deployment demonstrates that the U.S. and the U.K. are united in their efforts to ensure security and freedom of the seas, and that their maritime power projection capabilities are interoperable, complementary and global.

1stLt Zachary Bodner, USMC



Marines flying an AH-1Z Viper and two UH-1Y Venoms attached to VMM-165 (Rein), 11th MEU, fly past HMS *Queen Elizabeth* in the Arabian Sea, Nov. 8, 2021. Simultaneously, VMFA-211 cross-decked F-35B Lightning IIs to USS *Essex* (LHD-2).

1STLT ZACHARY BODNER, USMC

Exclusive Limited-Edition Proof Tribute

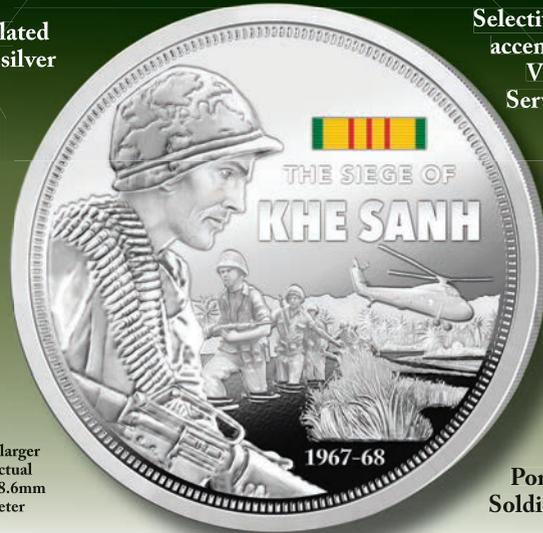
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“Battlefield Cross” symbolizes the fallen



Dates of the Vietnam War

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Portrait of U.S. Soldiers in action

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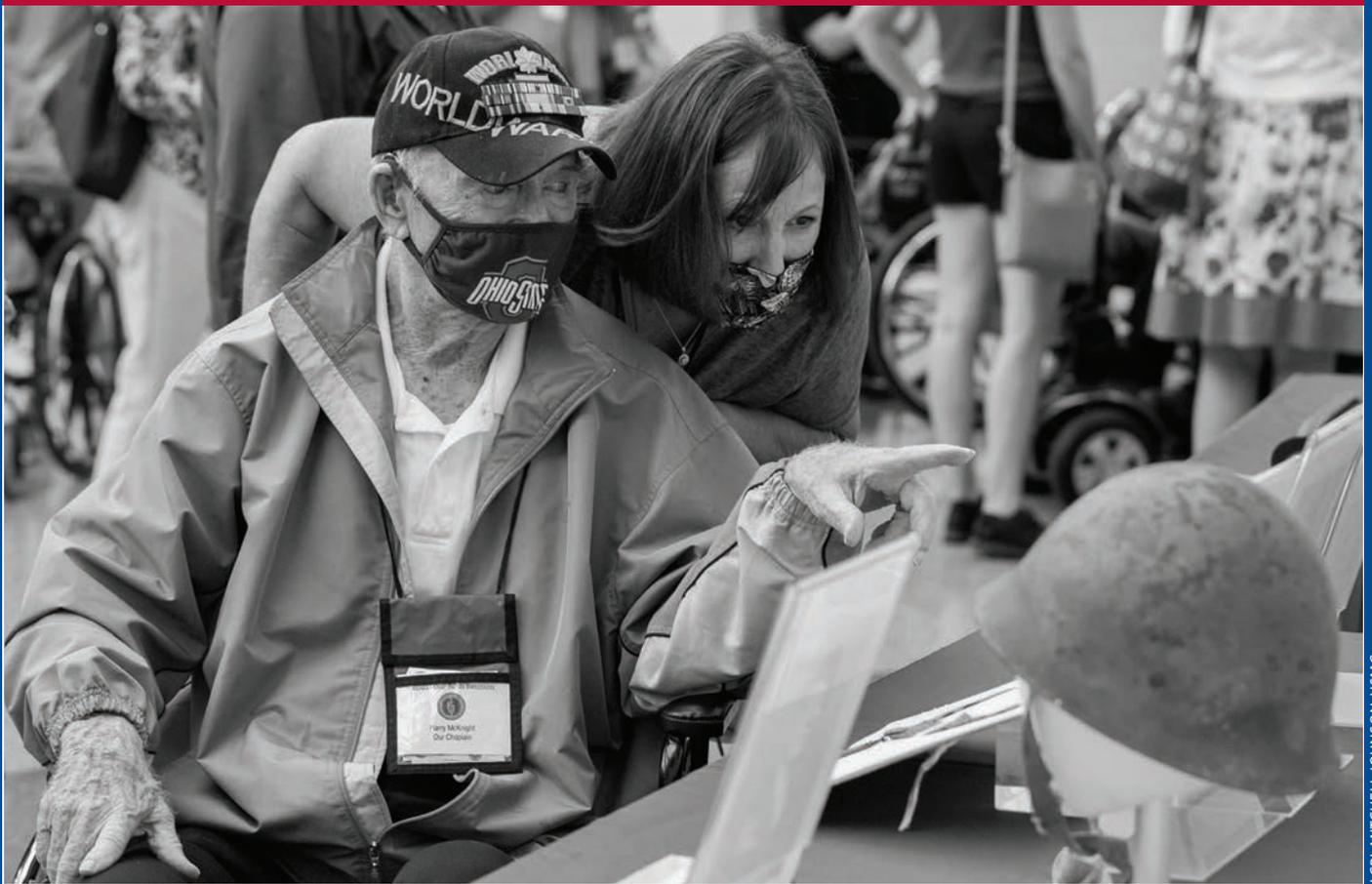
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LCPL MITCHELL JOHNSON, USMC

During a visit to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., Sept. 16, 2021, Harry McKnight looks at the Medal of Honor that was posthumously awarded to his best friend, Pvt Robert M. McTureous Jr., for heroism during the Battle of Okinawa in June 1945.



SARA W. BOCK

Veterans of 6thMarDiv gather around their Division flag shortly after its arrival at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, Sept. 16, 2021. The flag, which had been missing for decades, was located at MCRD San Diego and transported to the museum, where it is now part of the permanent collection.

The Last Men Standing

Battle of Okinawa Veterans Gather for Final 6th Marine Division Reunion

By Sara W. Bock

At 96, Marine veteran Watson Crumbie is nothing if not tenacious. So it's unsurprising that in the years leading up to the 50th and final reunion of the 6th Marine Division Association, he managed to track down two invaluable items that had disappeared without a trace: the Division's flag, which flew on Okinawa as its Marines engaged in bitter fighting to take control of Sugar Loaf Hill during the last major battle of World War II, and a decades-old bottle of Chivas Regal Scotch whisky, housed in a wooden case and adorned with a decanter tag that reads, "The General's Bottle for the Last Man."

It was a bittersweet occasion when the association gathered one last time in Fredericksburg, Va., Sept. 14-19, 2021, and an air of finality was almost palpable. Yet for the nine surviving members of the Division in attendance—all of whom are well into their 90s—having those items present and accounted for was affirmation that the time had come to close that chapter.

Unique in that it was stood up overseas on Guadalcanal in September 1944 and stood down in Tsingtao, China, just 18 months later in April 1946, the 6th Marine Division never graced U.S. soil and was never reactivated. Its Marines—some of whom, including Crumbie, had already tasted combat in the Pacific theater as members of the 29th, 22nd or 4th Regiments—earned their place among the legends of the Corps during the Division's sole campaign before the war's end: the Battle of Okinawa. While the 6thMarDiv's operational existence was brief, its spirit endured with the establishment of the 6th Marine Division Association, which began holding annual reunions at various locations across the U.S. in 1971.

For years, veterans of the 6thMarDiv had a plan for their final reunion, and it



It was a bittersweet occasion when the association gathered one last time in Fredericksburg, Va., Sept. 14-19, 2021, and an air of finality was almost palpable.



Watson Crumbie

involved opening a bottle of Scotch—but not just any old bottle. According to the association's newsletter, "The Striking Sixth," the origins of its "last man's bottle" can be traced back to Nov. 10, 1989, when three of the Division's veterans visited their former commanding general, Lemuel C. Shepherd Jr., who later served as the 20th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

"They brought a bottle of champagne, a German chocolate cake, and a bottle of Chivas Regal to celebrate the Marine Corps birthday," the story reads. "At the end of the evening, the general insisted the Marines take the bottle of Scotch to 'give the boys a drink' at the next reunion."

Rather than directly follow the general's orders, the Marines decided they had a better idea. One of the men, Jack Hoag, crafted a wooden box for the bottle with a plaque that read, "Property of the 6th Marine Division Association by order of Gen Lemuel C. Shepherd." Each year, beginning in 1990, the association auctioned off the bottle at its annual reunion, with the profits going to the scholarship fund at Gen Shepherd's alma mater, Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Va. The winner of the bottle would have their name engraved on the side of the box and would be its "caretaker" until the following year. And when the day came, the last surviving members of the Division would open it up and take a drink.

But sometime around 2006, the bottle didn't resurface, and no one seemed to recall who had "won" it or where it could be. The mystery remained unsolved until 2020 when Crumbie, in anticipation of the forthcoming final reunion, acted on a hunch and called the museum at VMI. The bottle was indeed there, having been errantly donated by its last caretaker, and would be delivered to the reunion personally by Colonel Keith Gibson, director of

NANCY S. LIGHTMAN



NANCY S. LIGHTMAN



COURTESY OF HARRY MCKNIGHT



SARA W. BOCK

Harry McKnight, left, pictured in the center photo while serving with Hotel Co, 3/29, 6thMarDiv, befriended Robert McTureous after the two completed boot camp and reported to Camp Lejeune. While visiting the National Museum of the Marine Corps during the Division's final reunion in September, McKnight had the opportunity to see the Medal of Honor that was posthumously awarded to McTureous, pictured in the photo on the right.

the VMI Museum System, who would then return it to the museum to be kept in perpetuity.

Locating the Division colors and arranging their transport was a far lengthier process, but by all accounts, it was more than worth the effort.

"It's pretty special," Crumbie said of the flag, which arrived at the National Museum of the Marine Corps, just outside the gate of Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., a week prior to the reunion, and was prominently displayed in its expansive Leatherneck Gallery

when the veterans were welcomed to the museum on Sept. 16.

Crumbie, who fought on Saipan and Okinawa during WW II, and later at the legendary Chosin Reservoir in Korea, recalled that no one knew what happened to the flag after the 6thMarDiv was disbanded in China in 1946. They assumed, he said, that Gen Shepherd had taken it home.

Nearly 10 years ago, Crumbie, who lives in Houston, Texas, began looking for the flag and eventually located it in a back hallway of the Command

Museum at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Calif. It remains a mystery how it ended up there and where it had been previously, but all parties involved agreed that the flag should be transferred from San Diego to the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Due to bureaucratic red tape, the complicated process of moving it was stalled until 2020 when 6thMarDiv Association historian Laura Lacey, determined to get the flag to Virginia in time for the final reunion, managed to successfully facilitate its relocation.



CARROLL MCGOWAN

Veterans of 6thMarDiv Neal McCallum, Ken Wells, Leonard Turner, Harry McKnight, D.C. Rigby, Ross Laporte and Watson Crumbie proudly wave American flags while standing alongside local officials during a visit to the Stafford War Memorial in Stafford, Va., Sept. 16, 2021.

Lacey's connection to the Division is unique, and her role in its association highlights a natural progression in which members of younger generations have taken an increasingly large role in sustaining the Division's annual reunions as the decades have passed. Once attended by hundreds of Marines who fought on Okinawa, the number of 6thMarDiv survivors decreased significantly in recent years, and the gatherings were bolstered by lineal descendants, extended family members and those, like Lacey, who aren't related by blood, but have taken a special interest in the Battle of Okinawa and the men who fought there. In the 1990s, when her husband, a Marine C-130 pilot, was stationed on Okinawa, Lacey was involved with the Battle of Okinawa Historical Display Museum on Camp Kinser, gave battlefield tours and was a "tunnel rat" who explored the caves that served as bunkers during the battle. A career educator who now works for Marine Corps Training & Education Command, Lacey authored the 2005 book "Stay Off the Skyline: The Sixth Marine Division on Okinawa," based on her oral history interviews with dozens of veterans of the Division.

For those members of the 6thMarDiv in attendance, as well as those who have a special connection to it, the opportunity to see the Division featured prominently in the National Museum of the Marine Corps meant a great deal. Curators pulled a number of significant items from the museum's collection and displayed them alongside the Division flag. These included the Navy Cross awarded to Private First Class James J. Chaisson for heroism on Okinawa in May 1945 and the Medal of Honor awarded posthumously to Private Robert M. McTureous Jr., assigned to the Division's "Hotel" Company, 3rd Battalion, 29th Marine Regiment, for charging enemy-occupied caves with grenades to divert heavy fire from stretcher-bearers to himself, ultimately sacrificing his own life to save his brothers-in-arms.

For 6thMarDiv veteran and association chaplain Harry McKnight, who also served with Hotel Co, 3/29, the opportunity to see that Medal of Honor was particularly impactful because its recipient was his best friend. McTureous and McKnight met just after graduating from boot camp at Marine Corps Re-



NANCY S. LICHTMAN

From the left, 6thMarDiv veterans Ken Wells, Leonard Turner and Ross Laporte visit in the hospitality room at Holiday Inn in Fredericksburg, Va., Sept. 17, 2021.

cruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., when they reported to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., for advanced training and were ordered to line up in alphabetical order.

"Our platoon started out with four Mahoneys, and everyone else was Mc-something," McKnight recalls with a laugh. They began as friends by proximity, but a few of them quickly became an inseparable trio: McKnight, McTureous and Don Mahoney.

"We'd go to chow together, we'd go every place, we'd make our plans for after the war," McKnight said.

After McTureous' body was returned stateside in early 1949, the family asked McKnight to travel from his home in Ohio to Florida to speak at the funeral.

"I went down and did what I thought was my moral duty, which was to represent Bob," said McKnight.

His friend's death forced him to face the realities of war. Once, during a firefight, McKnight recalls thinking to himself, "If I get out of this alive, what am I going to do with my life?"

"And I thought, 'Who had the best influence on me when I was growing up?' It was my teachers and coaches," he said. He considers himself lucky to have made it home without a scratch. He attended Ohio State University, later becoming a teacher and coach while also serving in the Air National Guard. In impressive shape at 95, McKnight still drops to the ground and does a push-up for every point Ohio State's football team scores.

The visit to the museum was just one of many activities on the itinerary during

the reunion, the "home base" of which was the Holiday Inn in Fredericksburg, and included a visit from local Stafford County, Va., representatives, who issued a proclamation honoring the 6thMarDiv Association; a recognition event at the Stafford War Memorial for the Division's veterans; music by the jazz band from MCB Quantico; tours



Marine veteran Joshua Hendricks displays a photo of his grandfather, Harold Youngren, who fought in the Battle of Okinawa with 6thMarDiv. Hendricks joined the Marine Corps because of his grandfather's influence and attended the reunion in hopes of learning more about his service during WW II. (Photo by Nancy S. Lichtman)



NANCY S. LICHTMAN



NANCY S. LICHTMAN

“The General’s Bottle for the Last Man,” which was passed to the highest bidder at the 6thMarDiv Association reunion each year until it disappeared in 2006, is kept in a wooden case with an engraved plaque that lists each of the bottle’s “caretakers” over the years. In the bottom photo, McKnight and Crumbie read the list of names together before participating in the long awaited “last man’s bottle” toast.

of local historic sites and a “battle in a box” presentation at the hotel by docents from the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

The final reunion drew Gillian Martin from Seattle, Wash., just a few months after her father, 6thMarDiv veteran Kenneth E. Martin, an avid reader of *Leatherneck*, passed away at the age of 100. She had joined him for the 2012 reunion in Portland, Ore., and felt that it was fitting to attend in his memory.

“He was so proud. He was just so proud of being a Marine and serving his country, and I was so proud of him,” Martin reflected as she perused the WW II gallery at the National Museum of the Marine Corps.

For Joshua Hendricks, who also traveled from Washington state, the final 6thMarDiv reunion was his first. He wanted to learn more about his grandfather, Harold Youngren, who served in the Division and whose influence and example led him to follow



NANCY S. LICHTMAN

in his footsteps and enlist in the Marine Corps in 1997.

“He never wanted to talk about his service,” said Hendricks. “He actually wrote me a letter in 8th grade when I did a report on the Marine Corps, and I still have it,” he added, pulling it out of a folder and reading aloud excerpts from its pages in which his grandfather described his arrival at boot camp during the war years.

It was a meaningful experience for Hendricks to meet Marines who served alongside his grandfather, and he lamented that there wouldn’t be

any more reunions in the future. His sentiments speak volumes about the bond shared by those who are connected to the Division, which from the outside looking in, is more reminiscent of a family than a group of individuals.

On Saturday, Sept. 18, the 6thMarDiv veterans and association members held a memorial service as a tribute to those members of the division who are no longer living, which also was a stark reminder of how rapidly members of the “greatest generation” are being lost. According to Lacey, 15 veterans were expected to attend the 2020 reunion—



NANCY S. LICHTMAN

From the left, Harry McKnight, Watson Crumbie and Ken Wells partake in the final toast, Sept. 18, 2021, during which seven surviving members of the 6thMarDiv drank from the bottle that originated with Gen Lemuel C. Shepherd, the Division's commanding general who later served as the 20th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

which was intended to be the Division's final gathering—before it was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Just one year later, only nine were left on the guest list.

Seven of those nine attended the final banquet on Saturday evening, as some were unable to stay for the entirety of the reunion. D.C. Rigby, Leonard Turner, Lester Penny, Harry McKnight, Watson Crumbie, Ken Wells and Neal McCallum gathered around the head table at the front of the room. It was an emotional moment, with hardly a dry eye in the room, as the veterans and attendees stood and belted out all three verses of "The Marines' Hymn."

As they prepared to open the long-lost bottle of Scotch for the "last man's bottle" toast, each of the 6thMarDiv veterans had an opportunity to speak to the crowd.

"When I reached my 90s, I thought, 'Why is the Lord keeping me going?' And it must have been for this moment right now," said Leonard Turner, who served with the Division's 4th Marine Regiment.

With that, seven shot glasses were filled, and the last men of the 6th Marine Division took a ceremonial swig.

Active-duty Marine Major Robert Murray, an infantry officer currently serving as the commanding officer of Marine Corps Recruiting Station Twin Cities, Minn., and the guest speaker at the banquet, spoke directly to the

veterans as he shared some heartfelt words.

"I am struck with similarities in our Marine culture despite the passage of time. Today's Marine Corps is the best America has to offer—we are still the youngest service, the fittest service, and the proudest service. This is a testament to your legacy. Our pride stems from your service and sacrifice," Murray said. "I assure you that we will do our best to uphold the legacy and culture you fought to give us. The Marines of

today will uphold honor, courage and commitment; our mission is to ensure our service does justice to the legacy of all veterans of the Second World War, and most especially, the legacy of the 6th Marine Division."

Editor's note: To learn more about the history of the 6thMarDiv and its fight to secure Okinawa, see "From the Archives: History of the 6th Marine Division" in the September 2021 issue of Leatherneck. 🍷



NANCY S. LICHTMAN

D.C. Rigby and Leonard Turner sit at the head table during the final banquet of the 6thMarDiv Association reunion, Sept. 18, 2021. Before the "last man's bottle" toast, each veteran had the opportunity to share a few words with the attendees.

Leatherneck Laffs



"Last minute advice?
Well, if you see something, shoot something."



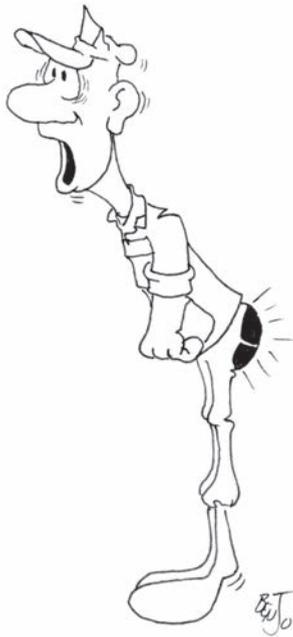
"You'll be spending a lot of time on beaches."



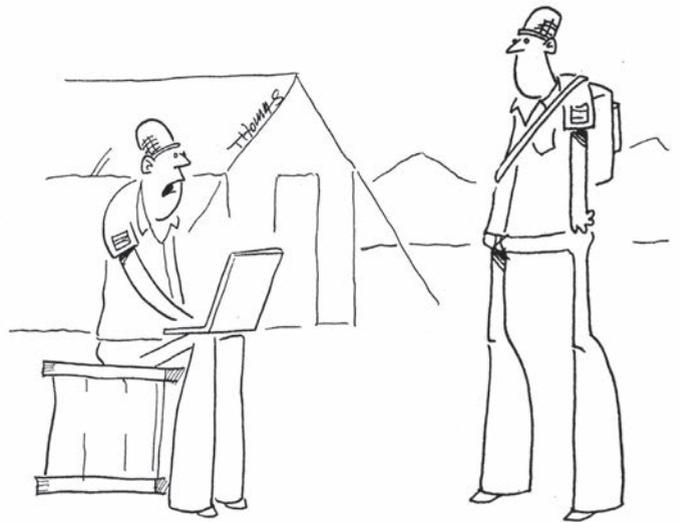
"My obstacle courses consist of getting around firewalls
and avoiding malware."



"When you have as many as I do,
one large multi-colored one is all you need to wear."



"Not a great idea to call the Gunny 'Sarge.' "



"We have a worse record with computer crashes than all our other vehicles combined."



"I said, 'HOW LONG DID YOU WORK IN ARTILLERY?'"



"Just once, I'd like to deploy 'First Class.' "

TANKS IS TIGHT



In a forest preserve north of Camp Hansen, novice drivers learned to cope with hairpin turns, steep grades and puddles of mud that coated tanks and drivers alike.

Story and photos by GySgt Ed Evans, USMC

Editor's note: As part of Force Design 2030, the Marine Corps has deactivated all tank battalions.

No Marine outfit is tighter than tanks. That's what the tankers themselves claim—that no Marine fraternity has the tight-knit esprit de corps that tankers enjoy. But then, they have an edge. There are only three tank battalions in the entire Marine Corps.

One of those battalions, 3rd Tank Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, was the first one into Vietnam. Since the 3rdMarDiv pulled out in 1969, 3rd Tanks has parked itself at Camp Hansen, Okinawa.

In the short time since they left Vietnam, most of their combat-experienced men have rotated to other commands or ended their active service. Now the battalion is once again in the business of training new Marines to become qualified tankers. Fortunately, the love of tanks has retained an experienced nucleus of old tanker hands. Some of them date through Vietnam back to Korea.

Lieutenant Colonel Charles R. Stiffler commands the 587

men of 3rd Tank Bn. He's been a tank officer throughout his 18 years of service and, with a few exceptions, has always been involved with tanks one way or another.

"Most tankers know the others in their field and that includes the mechanics. We're a proud bunch. We take care of our own, stick together and support one another," said Stiffler.

The colonel was especially proud of his battalion at that moment. A month earlier, the commanding general had inspected the battalion and made a point of asking the men two questions: "What is your MOS?" and "Would you rather be something else?"

"Every man said no, he wanted to be a tanker," the colonel related, obviously relishing the knowledge that every man in his outfit was there because he wanted to be. "Within our battalion we have communicators, cooks, messmen, motor transport people, but they all band together. You ask them who they belong to, and they'll tell you they belong to tanks."

Such widespread enthusiasm doesn't just happen. Much of it is probably due to the experience and confidence conveyed

by such men as Chief Warrant Officer Donald J. Clark, Master Sergeant Gerard W. Hodum, and MSgt James C. “Cowboy” Smith, to name a few.

Clark has 16 years in tanks. He was with 3rd Tanks when they went into Vietnam in December 1964. Flame Platoon, which he now commands, has the entire history of the Corps’ M48A3 medium tank within its tank park. One of Clark’s tanks has an original M48 hull from 1953, one of the last manufactured. The other flame tanks have one of each from the different series of M48 hulls, some one-piece hulls, some three-piece. Clark is familiar with all of them and knows the functioning of his tanks inside and out.

MSgt Gerard W. Hodum, a 24-year veteran, is the battalion’s operations chief. “I started out as a grunt, a machine gunner, at Camp Lejeune in the early 1950s,” Hodum recalled. “We were out on a field problem and a tank came by and splashed mud all over us. Well, I figured to hell with this, I’m going to become a tanker! I did and I never regretted it.

“I think the reason 3rd Tanks here is such a great outfit is because we’ve got a great skipper,” Hodum said. “LtCol Stiffler makes an effort to go see each section at least once every two weeks. Some commanders get locked into their jobs, and they tend to take everything for granted. But not this guy. He makes everyone feel like they’re needed.”

Hodum’s combat experience with tanks includes not only Vietnam and Korea, but also Santo Domingo. When the 6th Marines landed on Santo Domingo in 1965, Hodum’s platoon went in as support, the second one to land. Ten days ahead of them, “Cowboy” Smith’s platoon got there first.

MSgt James C. “Cowboy” Smith, of Abilene, Texas, is probably one of the Corps’ best-known tankers. If you mention the name Cowboy Smith to a tanker, his eyes light up. The first thing he says is, “Do you know him?” If you do, you’ve scored 20 points. They talk about Cowboy the way Marines used to go on about Lou Diamond and Bigfoot Brown.

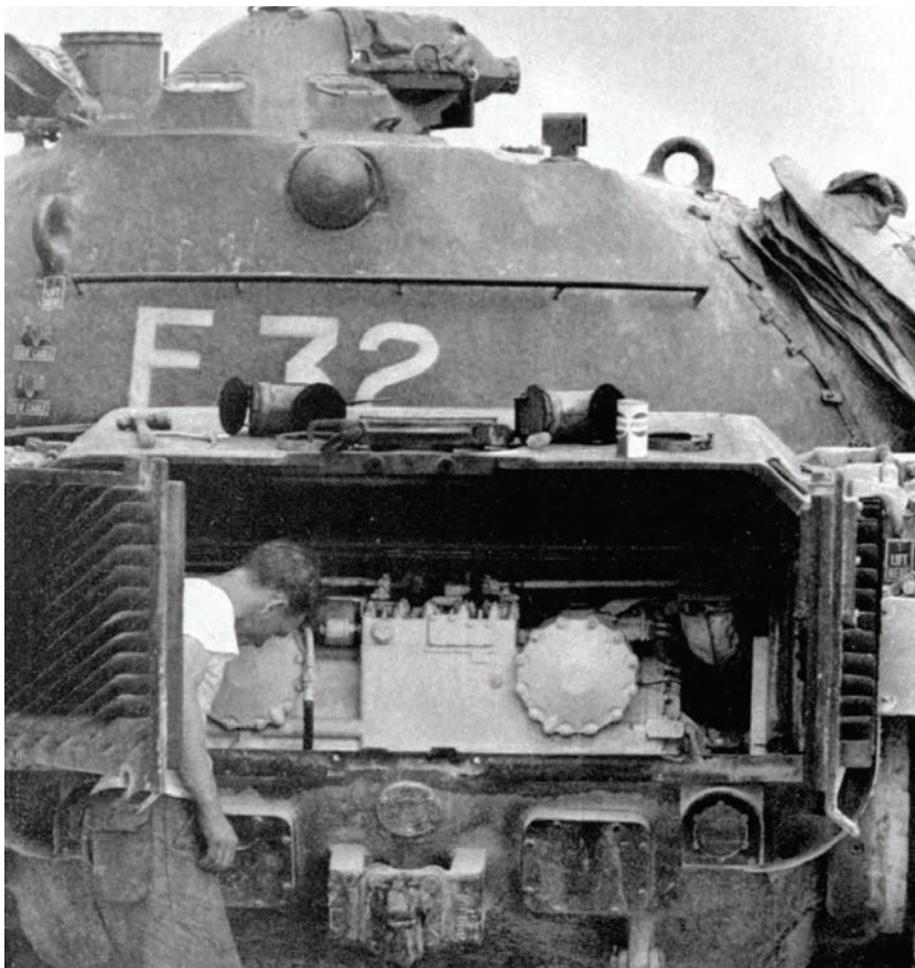
There are three things most tankers will tell you about Cowboy Smith. First of all, that he’s a real individual, a character, and secondly, that he knows his tanks better than any other Marine. They also advise you never to stand downwind of Cowboy’s tank. He’s an inveterate snuff chewer and it’s said a whole can of snuff can disappear beneath his lower lip.

Many younger tankers, like Sergeant William Johnson, first heard about Cowboy Smith in tank school. “He was held up as an example to us,” Johnson recalled. “They said if we got in his unit, we could be sure we’d know what we were doing. If we didn’t know when we got there, we’d know before we left. Now I know why. MSgt Smith is one of the most patient instructors I’ve ever seen. He also knows a great deal about every subject, not just tanks, but every military subject from infantry tactics to drilling troops.”

Smith can usually be found in the tank park, advising and overseeing the work on the battalion’s tanks. As a member of

“With these diesel tanks you don’t have any more ignition problems or backfires or crankcase explosions. It used to be that, on a cold morning, you’d crank that old gas tank up and that little dipstick would fly right up in the air.”

MSgt James C. “Cowboy” Smith



LCpl Eugene Beeler, tank commander, took a proprietary interest in cleaning “his” tank’s engine. Beeler’s Flame Tank No. 32 carries a three-man crew and 380 gallons of napalm.

Co A, Smith fills the billet of the company gunny. But since he’s a master sergeant, they’ve conferred upon him the title of Tank Leader.

He enlisted in the Corps in January 1951. Before that his occupational specialty was herding cows. To this day he stands like he just climbed out of the saddle. Now and then, he pulls out a small can and dips out a liberal forefinger of snuff to replenish his supply.

“You’ll probably find that most people in tanks chew snuff and tobacco,” Smith drawled, “because you’re not supposed to smoke around the tanks. Of course, it’s not as dangerous now as it used to be when we had the old gasoline engines. With these diesel tanks you don’t have any more ignition



Tankers rumbled through their Okinawa training area in a tactical formation while practicing their driving skills.

problems or backfires or crankcase explosions. It used to be that, on a cold morning, you'd crank that old gas tank up and that little dipstick would fly right up in the air. It's the diesel engine now that makes these tanks operate so well.

"Those old ones, you back off the accelerator, maybe you're running a little too rich, and a solid sheet of flame would flare out the back end of that thing. You'd singe the eyebrows off the tank behind you. Now, if we'd had gas engines in these things in Vietnam, I wouldn't be here today. That SOB would've caught fire when we hit a big mine down there.

"I went into Vietnam with Co B, 3rd Tanks, in 1966. That's where I really got my confidence in these tanks. We operated around Da Nang with the 9th Marines and the 5th Marines. Those rice paddies had a hard bottom, and once you sank down just so far, why, these M48s did surprisingly well.

"The tank I started out with was the M4A3. It had a 500-horsepower Ford engine. Some had 75 mm and 105 mm guns. The whole tank weighed about 35 tons. Now we're up to 62 tons with 120 mm guns, but those are all at Camp

Pendleton and Camp Lejeune. We never did bring any heavy tanks overseas.

"My first outfit in 1951 was the 7th Tank Bn. I reported there right off my boot leave, didn't even go to ITR (Infantry Training Regiment). The 7th Tanks was done away with about 1953. I've been here in 3rd Tanks about, let's see, two-three-four-five, about five tours of duty. Guess I've been in every tank battalion except 8th Tanks. They broke up about 1959."

"I've always liked tanks. Even after 20 years with them I'm still learning. I believe this M48 here is the best tank the U.S. has. I've got all the confidence in the world in it. Best damn tank I've ever been in as far as fire control, suspension system and all."

Smith's confidence in the M48 tank is well-placed. A comparison with three Soviet tanks shows the M48 to be superior in range and armament. This includes the T-54 Medium Tank, the T-34/85 Medium Tank, and the Amphibious Tank PT-76, the only operational amphibious tank organic to any army today.



Frontal armor on the M48 runs four inches thick, and there's three inches of side armor and 11 inches of turret armor. That's almost double the protection of the Soviet tanks.

The Corps' M48A3 medium tank tops out at 54 tons, running on a V-12 diesel engine with 750 horsepower. It can travel at 30 mph. with a cruising range of 300 miles, farther than any of the Soviet tanks. The M48 packs a 90 mm gun as its main armament, carrying 62 rounds of ammo. It also has a .30-caliber machine gun and a .50-caliber machine gun as secondary armament.

Frontal armor on the M48 runs four inches thick, and there's three inches of side armor and 11 inches of turret armor. That's almost double the protection of the Soviet tanks.

Obviously, the M48's mobility and firepower are only as good as the drivers and gunners putting them into action.

Prior to and during Vietnam, tankers could use just about any part of Okinawa for training. More recently, however, many of the bridges have been reclassified due to their age and will not hold tank traffic. With the exception of nearby Camp Schwab, tankers are also severely limited in their choice of firing ranges for their 90 mm guns.

Lately, the battalion has been sending a company at a time to Camp Fuji, Japan, for live firing exercises. They are also able to attach one platoon to the Battalion Landing Teams afloat. This allows them to pick up their 90 mm firing practice at Subic Bay in the Philippines.

LtCol Stiffler sees the live firing exercises as a necessity. "Unless the man is sitting in the tank, at the controls, when



Hands on hips, MSgt Cowboy Smith watched to see that while the tankers took a break, the tanks, like yesterday's cavalry horses, were taken care of first.



PFC David Woods checked a helmet as PFC Michael Howe, Sgt Louis Adams and LCpl James Lowry inventoried the removable equipment from an M48 tank from H&S Co.

that 90 mm goes off, you just don't get the necessary firing experience," he emphasized.

The tankers are able to get in plenty of on-the-road experience with the M48s, using a training area north of Camp Hansen. The rolling, shrub-covered hills, four miles from the camp, are leased by the Marine Corps from the Okinawa government. There are some restrictions, however, since the area is a nature preserve and the tanks must stick to the roads.

Grunts from the 4th Marines also use the same area for their maneuvers. This sometimes results in unplanned infantry-tank coordination practice.

During one such encounter, tankers of the 1st Platoon, Co A, were maneuvering up a road when they were hailed by a grunt squad. The squad leader told section leader Staff Sergeant S.A. Soto that he'd spotted an ambush around the

Would the tanks give them cover through the ambush? Soto smiled, radioed instructions through his headset to the tanks behind him and waved the grunts alongside his lead tank.

bend ahead. Would the tanks give them cover through the ambush? Soto smiled, radioed instructions through his headset to the tanks behind him and waved the grunts alongside his lead tank.

The squad in ambush was so surprised by the rush of tanks they almost forgot to fire. Inside the tanks, the gunners reconned the ambush area by mock-firing their .50-cal. machine guns. The grunt squad ran alongside, careful to keep the tanks between them and the ambush, grinning all the way. Once through the ambush, the squad leader flashed SSgt Soto the "thumbs up" sign and disappeared into the bush.

After practicing tank deployment operations through the morning, the platoons rally at a designated parking area. Here they break for chow and a critique of the morning's work.

This is where the old hands are at their best. In their time, they've seen the best and worst of tank maneuvering. They can spot tactical flaws like lint on dress blues.

When Cowboy Smith critiques, he usually spices his lessons-learned lectures with a liberal dose of his personal experiences. He makes it a pleasure to learn.

One of the stories he likes to tell is about the time everyone on his tank smoked cigars, except him. Every time it rained, they would button up the tank and he'd have to stick his face in the gun breech

to breathe fresh air.

Then there's the one about the monkey they used to keep on his tank in Vietnam. Smith tells how she'd curl up and sleep under your arm at night, then wake you up in the darkness, going through your pockets. Then there was the day they were walking back to the tank, having left the monkey tied to the turret, and found that scroungy ball of fur using their brand new 35 mm camera to beat the tank to death.

He also likes to tell how the monkey used to crawl out on the gun tube, as far as the leash would allow, and ride into battle like a furry cavalier.

Smith remembers well the time they had a German tank officer visiting 2nd Tanks at Camp Lejeune as part of a base tour. "This German officer," he related, "was only supposed to stay for 40 minutes. Four and a half hours later, he left. I asked him if he didn't have a schedule to keep, but he said, 'I'm just going to look at radios. I can see radios anytime, but I can't always talk tanks!' Yep, tankers are the same all around the world."

That's the fourth thing you learn about Cowboy Smith. Don't get him started reminiscing if you have an appointment to keep. Once he starts telling stories, you'll forget all about the time.

But it's Marines like Smith and Hodum and the others who make tanks the close outfit that it is.

"Tankers, you know, they're a different breed of guy," Smith likes to say. "Everybody likes to think their outfit is a little better. The only difference is, we show it!" 🐼

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St. George, Utah

League Members Support Gold Star Family Memorial

Members of the Utah Dixie Detachment 1270, Marine Corps League, gathered in St. George, Utah, Aug. 19, 2021, to present a check for \$500 to support the construction of a Gold Star Family Memorial in historic downtown St. George. Accepting the donation from Pat Lisi, detachment commandant, and Jerry Harris, detachment member, were St. George Mayor Michele Randall and Councilman Bryan Smethurst.

The monument in St. George, which was dedicated during a ceremony on Nov. 10, 2021, is the latest in the Gold Star Families Memorial Monument initiative of the Woody Williams Foundation, named for retired Marine warrant officer and World War II Medal of Honor recipient Hershel "Woody" Williams. To date, more than 90 Gold Star Families Memorial Monuments have been installed nationwide with 78 more in progress.



COURTESY OF BILL FORTUNE

"Downtown St. George is the perfect location for this monument," said Mayor Randall. "We have a patriotic community that has risen to the occasion and generously contributed to the fundraising effort."

Submitted by Bill Fortune

Palmdale, Calif.

Volunteers Support Marine Veteran During Rainbow Build Event

The nonprofit organization Homes 4 Families hosted its annual Rainbow Build, a volunteer event that partners with and engages the local LGBTQ+ community, at its 56-home Veteran Enriched Neighborhood in Palmdale, Calif., Sept. 18, 2021. Volunteers with Rainbow Build and event sponsor Boeing, (right) gathered at the home of Marine veteran Teri Thompson during the event. Thompson's home was one of 10 homes for low-income veterans that was painted by the participants.

Homes 4 Families is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit that empowers veterans and their families to enter the middle class by providing them with affordable housing and holistic services that build resiliency, self-sufficiency and economic growth. Through its outcome-proven Enriched Neighborhood model, the nonprofit provides service-members and their families with comprehensive services that equip them to succeed in civilian life, including financial education,



STACEY CHIANG

therapeutic workshops, trauma-informed programs and veteran-to-veteran support. For more information, visit www.homes4families.org.

Submitted by Stacey Chiang

Somerset County, Pa.



COURTESY OF RANDY MUSSEY

Troops Killed in Kabul Honored in Field of Heroes Flag Plaza

During a Sept. 3, 2021, ceremony, the Patriot Park Foundation dedicated the Field of Heroes Flag Plaza at Patriot Park Global War on Terror Memorial in Somerset County, Pa., which is located on the grounds of the Flight 93 National Memorial. The flag display includes one flag for each servicemember who has died since 9/11 in the Global War on Terrorism. The foundation added 13 flags to the field on Aug. 28, prior to the dedication, to honor the 11 Marines, one Navy corpsman and one soldier who were killed in the suicide bombing attack at the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan.

In addition to the servicemembers who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, the park also pays tribute to those "first combatants" in the Global War on Terrorism: the brave passengers of United Airlines Flight 93 who, after realizing their plane was being hijacked on Sept. 11, 2001, took action to prevent further tragedy that day. Patriot Park, which is still under development, will eventually include a memorial plaza, story boards, picnic pavilions and an education center. The Field of Honor Flag display is the part of the park's first phase. For more information, visit www.patriotparkfoundation.org.

Submitted by Randy Musser

Fredericksburg, Va.

Marines Gather to Celebrate WW II Veteran's 99th Birthday

In June 2021, members of the Jack Maas Detachment 1379, Marine Corps League, in Fredericksburg, Va., had the pleasure of celebrating the 99th birthday of World War II Marine veteran Ralph Wilcox. Wilcox, pictured third from the left, was born on June 4, 1922, and enlisted in the Corps in 1939. A veteran of numerous operations in the WW II Pacific campaigns, his first combat assignment was at Guadalcanal, followed by Peleliu. He completed his Pacific service on Okinawa, returned stateside in 1945 and retired from the Marine Corps in 1959.

Submitted by Bill Anderson



COURTESY OF BILL ANDERSON

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

FREAKS OF A FEATHER

By Kacy Tellessen

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from "Freaks of a Feather," by Kacy Tellessen, who served as an infantry Marine in 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines from 2005-2009 and deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

We had survived another week of post. It was miserable but uneventful. Back on patrols, we all felt like our chances for grunt work improved exponentially. But our first patrol of the new cycle was ending, and we were still combat virgins.

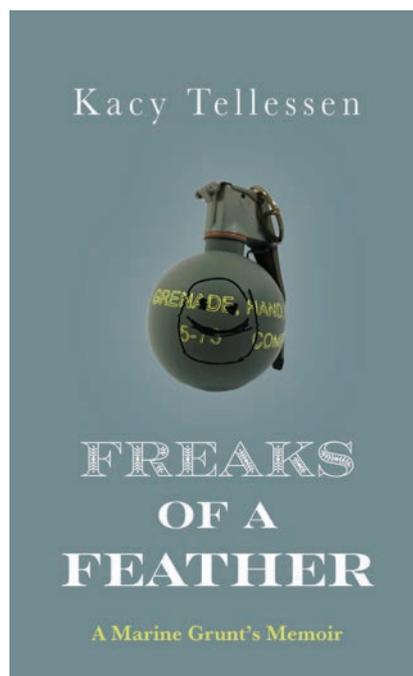
The patrol seemed to have covered the entire city. We patrolled through all the hot spots looking for a fight, but so far, nothing had happened. On this day, we had set out in the early morning hours, but the late afternoon sun beat down on us. The depression and sweat rolled down my back in equal measure. Corporal Gardner passed the word through the squad: RTB. Return to base.

We were patrolling back down the slope of the city and toward the forward operating base (FOB) when a halt was called. Each of us took a position that offered some sort of cover. I looked down the street and saw kneeling Marines hiding behind corners like toddlers who hadn't quite figured out the rules of hide and go seek. Gun barrels pointed at empty windows and down avenues of approach. We tried to cover every possible angle, but deep down, we all knew that was impossible in an urban environment. We could have been kneeling on buried improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for all we knew. I watched as Gardner kneeled next to the radio operator. They exchanged words, but I've always been a terrible lip reader. Eventually, we received word that we were to cover an integrated squad of Iraqis and Marines as they crossed the bridge into Bonnie-D.

The Marines with the Iraqis were part of the MiTT Team, or Military Transition Team. These Marines were plucked from various positions throughout the

company, all of them squad or team leaders, and told to lead Iraqis on combat missions. The idea was to shape the Iraqis into disciplined warfighters. Corporal Hall, a machine gunner who showed me around when I first showed up to the fleet, was one of these Marines. When he told me the news, I felt uneasy for him. The thought of trusting the Iraqis out on patrol, with loaded AK-47s and belts full of grenades, sounded like a white-knuckle existence to me. There was no way of determining where these men's loyalties truly lay.

The point man diverted the patrol and took us toward the edge of the city to overlook the bridge. We patrolled up to a steep hill that led down to a clearing.



We would have to traverse about 100 yards of no man's land to get to the other side. Our fire team prepared to cover the rest of the squad as they made it across. One by one, they slid down the hill and ran across the clearing, some of them resorting to sledding down the hill on their butts. The terrain was made entirely of loose gravel and dirt banks. It would be an easy place to bury an IED. But they all made it across, scurrying

up the far side of the clearing to an abandoned building. When they gave us the signal to cross, our corpsman Zeb and I brought up the rear.

As per the Geneva Convention, corpsmen and other medical personnel are considered noncombatants. But the insurgents' guerilla warfare ignored all laws of war, with a particular disregard for the Geneva Convention. The insurgents would go so far as to target medical personnel, and the large medical bags carried by the corpsmen sometimes served as a target for enemy snipers. Losing a corpsman was guaranteed to both simultaneously take away the lifesaving capability of a squad and erode their morale. Zeb knew this and often talked about it over shaky cigarettes. Zeb was different than we were. Really, all corpsmen are different than Marines. Generally, I find corpsmen to be better humans, more compassionate, more caring. That's probably why corpsmen enjoy an elevated position among Marines because they tend to be everything we are not. Most join the military because they want to support the cause but don't want to do it with the business end of an M16. They want to save lives, not take them.

Zeb ran in front of me, holding down the top of his helmet like it was going to blow away in the wind. A rifle shot cracked through the silence and a round impacted the hillside directly above Zeb. I couldn't help but smile. This was everything I had been working toward. But as we ran through the naked ground of the wadi, I realized something was wrong. Zeb wasn't moving.

I watched as bullets inched closer to Zeb. They created plumes of dirt that danced around him. It looked like the invisible hand of a giant, drumming on the ground with impatient fingers. Each machine-gun burst—a pinky, ring, middle, index and thumb—flicked dirt into the sky. I ran as fast as I could to Zeb's side, grabbed him by the back of the flak jacket, and pushed him toward cover. Zeb stumbled like a drunk. I strained and pushed to get him up the other side of the hill while his legs



The forward operating base that “Golf” Co, 2/3 occupied in Haqlaniya, Iraq, from 2006 to 2007.

simply refused to work. I focused on the abandoned building’s open door, not the bullets that impacted all around us. I pushed Zeb into the building’s first floor, then bolted upstairs, taking the steps two at a time. Rifle shots from Cpl Gardner and Lance Corporal Alonzo echoed in the stairwell. By the time I made it to the roof, the shooting had stopped. Silence and the smell of sulfur hung in the air. The enemy had fled. We called in the incident to the combat operations center (COC) and informed them that we were in position.

The FOB was barely out of view, but I could see the bridge directly in front of the FOB. A large Marine with a radio on his back began sprinting across the bridge in a serpentine pattern. We were told in a brief that the only way to go across the bridge was in an armored vehicle or a dead sprint. This first Marine had taken the advice to heart. Another Marine charged across the bridge before a clumped mass of Iraqis began to cross. While the Iraqis crossed, all hell broke loose.

Fire erupted from across the bridge. An abandoned industrial park to our north flashed with the orange explosions

I heard Marines screaming in pure elation like we were having a snowball fight instead of trying to kill humans. Time seemed to slow as the bullets impacted the wall in front of me. The SAW in my hand bucked from the controlled explosions that exited the barrel.

of enemy barrels. Everyone on the roof picked a muzzle flash and began firing. When my squad automatic weapon (SAW) jammed, my hands worked without thought, muscle memory clearing the blockage. I fired more, jammed again, cleared it. I heard Marines screaming in pure elation like we were having a snowball fight instead of trying to kill humans. Time seemed to slow as the bullets impacted the wall in

front of me. The SAW in my hand bucked from the controlled explosions that exited the barrel.

The Iraqis on the bridge were integrating themselves nicely into the chaos, shooting in all directions with no care for where their bullets landed. I had heard of the tactic, but this was the first time I had ever seen it live. It was called the Iraqi death blossom, and it truly was a sight to behold. Once the first shot was fired, the Iraqis picked a direction and held down the triggers of their Russian- and Chinese-built rifles. They waved the rifles back and forth as the projectiles spewed out of the barrels. The Iraqis didn’t care where their bullets went as long as they were putting rounds downrange. There was a common sense to it—sometimes the sound of fire being returned is enough to make the enemy flee. But the consequence of the deadly desert flower was that the bullets didn’t care if you were supposed to be on the same team. There had been American casualties of the Iraqi death blossom. I was first told about the death blossom in the Mojave Desert by a grunt-turned desert instructor. He said you better make sure your ass is behind cover from

Right: Kacy Tellessen attempts to mule kick a door while members of his squad from 2/3 look on, during a deployment to Iraq in 2006-2007.

all the Iraqis with Aks—enemy and not. As the misguided friendly bullets slapped into the wall in front of me, I felt like I finally understood the lesson.

Then, as quickly as it began, the rifle fire ceased. Silence pervaded. We prepared for a counterattack. I checked my ammo and told the squad leader that I had plenty left for another fight. The rest of the Iraqis and Marines made it across, disappearing into a building right on the other side of the bridge. I looked out over the wadi that separated the two cities and caught movement. The first signal that ignited in my brain came from somewhere deep in the storage shelves of familiar images. It said rabbits: the same kind of rabbits that had gotten out of their pens at my childhood house and multiplied like some furry science-fiction epidemic. As a kid, I was constantly catching rabbits' movements out of the corner of my eye. Another of the never-ending progeny of Rocky and Snowball, I'd think. But standing on this Iraqi rooftop, another thought clicked into place. These weren't rabbits, but two grown men running up the hill to the decrepit industrial park. I sighted



in on the man in a white track shirt, leading him slightly.

Calmly, probably too calmly, I told Cpl Gardner what I saw. He put his rifle to his eye, using the scope to try and see any weapons. He couldn't see any at first. I asked him if I could fire. I had no idea what I was asking for, only that this was what I had trained to do, the chance to see the enemy in an open field. My finger moved from its straightened position, where it had

rested on the trigger guard, and slowly shifted to the crescent-moon-shaped trigger. My finger caressed the trigger, slightly rubbing it on the back side where the metal turns from smooth to rough. I waited for the one-word death sentence for the two men. Cpl Gardner wanted to be sure.

Despite the depiction of Marines as bloodthirsty killers, we are primarily creatures of discipline. Justifiably, any shots fired, or people killed are subject



Marines Kacy Tellessen, right, and Kyle Huth clear buildings in the industrial park of Haqlaniya, Iraq.

Veteran Uses Writing to Reflect on Combat Memories

Corporal Kacy Tellessen picked up his Ruger .44 Magnum and held it to his head—his plan was to take his own life. He paused and decided to wait long enough to explain himself. He wanted his family to understand what had brought him to such despair. He unloaded the weapon, locked it in a safe and put away the ammunition. Tellessen began writing the next morning. As he was writing, describing how war had changed him, Tellessen began to feel different. He began to make sense of all that he had experienced during his 2006-2007 deployment to the Haditha area of Al Anbar Province, Iraq. For Tellessen, writing was therapeutic, and soon, what had started as his suicide note, became his life raft. That was 10 years ago. Tellessen recently published the writings that saved his life in the book, *“Freaks of a Feather: A Marine Grunt’s Memoir.”*

“I got to the point where the gun was in my hand and I told myself that the first thing I would do is I would tell the story first. I would say that I owed it to my family and my friends to write this down. And so, I started doing that, and in the process it really helped me work through the issues that I was going through,” said Tellessen in a recent interview with *Leatherneck*.

Tellessen grew up in a small town in Washington and enlisted with his parents’ permission in 2005 at the age of 17. He deployed in 2006 as a machine gunner with “Golf” Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines, 3rd Marine Division. He completed a second deployment in 2008, this time to the outskirts of Fallujah, Iraq. He left the Marine Corps in 2009 but struggled in his attempts to return to civilian life and began drinking heavily. “I self-medicated with alcohol. I knew the trope of the disturbed alcoholic war veteran and found it easy to slide into the well-worn groove of the cliché,” writes Tellessen in his book.

At one point, he sought help through the Department of Veterans Affairs, but he grew frustrated navigating the VA system. After finally securing an appointment with a mental health provider, Tellessen had difficulty talking about what he was feeling. “I was still afraid of showing weakness, afraid of letting anyone know that my façade was just that,” writes Tellessen.

He was still in turmoil when he left the counseling session. He didn’t take any of the prescribed medications and skipped his follow-up appointment with the VA psychologist. That’s when Tellessen decided to end his life. He made the decision to delay long enough to tell his story.

“For me, being able to write the story down and get it out of my brain, it was kind of ricocheting off the grey matter in my brain ... it just was overwhelming to me but when I put it down on the page it made it into this linear narrative that I could look at as a story and it was out of my head and it helped me start to process things,” Tellessen said. Having the story on paper gave him much-needed clarity. “This is not this overwhelming experience that I can’t get over. This is just a story, and I can comb over it, I can make sense of it. I can talk to people about it if I want to,” he explained.

Tellessen eventually enrolled in a creative writing program at Eastern Washington University where he fine-tuned his storytelling skills and polished his manuscript, earning his bachelor’s degree in 2017. It took some time to find a publisher for *“Freaks of a Feather,”* but since the book was released in August 2021, he said the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

“You know as a combat vet ... I always feel like people look at me and treat me like I’m a rabid dog, and I didn’t think the memoir was going to help that situation out at all, so I was nervous; but the response I have gotten so far has been just amazing,” Tellessen said. “I don’t think there’s any higher praise than [when] a Marine that was there ... says, ‘Hey, you know, this is what it was like and you captured that.’ So that means the world to me. I’ve had a lot of spouses reach out too and say that the book has brought them closer to their spouse because they are able to

maybe somewhat better understand their experience,” Tellessen added.

Tellessen, currently a second-year law student at the Gonzaga University School of Law in Spokane, Wash., said he plans to keep writing and encourages other veterans to do the same.

“I always tell people, even if you just want to keep a journal, and you don’t ever have to show anybody, I think that just you’ll start uncovering things about your memory that you might have repressed or that you can’t articulate,” he said. “I’m not the best speaker, I’m better with a pen or keyboard ... and I think that the time it takes to get your thoughts from your brain into your fingertips that’s just enough time to start the process [and], hopefully start to make sense of these things. Anyone who’s willing to listen to me, I’ll tell them that writing as a hobby is one of the greatest things you can do.”

Nancy S. Lichtman

“You know as a combat vet ... I always feel like people look at me and treat me like I’m a rabid dog, and I didn’t think the memoir was going to help that situation ... but the response I have gotten so far has been just amazing.”



Kacy Tellessen, right, and fellow Marine Kyle Huth on patrol in Haqlaniya, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

to heavy scrutiny. Our deployment came in the wake of the Haditha massacre, where Marines led a bloody, revenge-fueled assault on a house that resulted in the death of a family of innocents. The world was watching the Marines. The chain of command had told us that no quarter would be given to those who violated the rules of engagement or decided to take justice into their own hands; they would be punished to the fullest extent of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. I like to think that those words were echoing in Cpl Gardner's head, informing his mental calculus. By the time he opened his mouth, the men were at the top of the hill where a white car waited for them.

"Fuck it, FIRE."

An amateur machine gunner will squeeze the trigger and try to ride the bucking dragon in his hands. The professional, the true machine gunner,

will squeeze the trigger in tight, controlled bursts. Tiny burps of fire will leave the barrel in five to seven round increments. I aimed at the bottom center of the car's rear door, where I saw a man hop into the car. I squeezed the trigger. Holes manifested themselves in the back of the car, large gray holes pocking the metal. I squeezed again. And again. And again. The car's tires lurched forward, and the vehicle vanished behind the buildings, where I would never see it again.

I looked around the rooftop at the other Marines. They all stared at me, most of them smiling. I think some were jealous, others proud. This was our mission, our purpose in life ever since stepping on the yellow footprints at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot. My finger extended from the trigger guard as smoke rose from my SAW's barrel. The smell of gunfire filled my nostrils, a

**I felt nothing when he
told me the news.
I worried that my
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stinging but welcoming scent. It reminded me of a childhood of shooting soda cans. Now that scent memory coalesced with this moment: my first time in combat and the first time I ever shot at another human being.

I never saw a body or any blood. I never saw a skinny man in a white tracksuit staring up at the sky with dead eyes. My squad leader told me that a car matching our white car's description was found with a dead body inside, just to the north of our AO. The car was riddled with bullet holes, the trunk filled with munitions: a medium machine gun, grenades and cases of ammunition. I felt nothing when he told me the news.

I worried that my non-reaction made me a sociopath. All I'd felt was recoil, and satisfaction, knowing that I hadn't frozen when the bullets began to fly. As the news of the firefight spread around the company, Marines began slapping me on the back as I walked past. Others looked at me with contempt because I was in the right place at the right time. I think war was still a game to us then. It wouldn't last. Stray bullets can only remain stray for so long. Fictional IEDs would become oh-dear-God IEDs. Death as an abstraction would dissolve and show us its true rotting face. But in that moment, we were still unscathed kids.

As if to underscore our naivete, we had taken a picture together on the roof after the firefight. It was something a bunch of high schoolers would have done after winning a tough football game. I don't know what the hell we were thinking, but I still have the picture. I'm standing on the far left, my SAW resting on my hip, barrel pointed at the sky. Cpl Gardner is in the center back row without his helmet on, staring

into the camera with squinted eyes. The other face I always focus on is LCpl Alonzo, who stands on the other side of the back row, opposite me. Along with Cpl Gardner, Alonzo was the only other Marine in the squad with combat experience. He was one of the Afghanistan vets. There is a subtle smile on his face like he was pleased with how his boots reacted under fire. The only man not in the picture is Zeb. He was the one taking the picture.

When it was over, we patrolled back to the base like conquering heroes. We had survived our first firefight; we finally had a story of our own. When we entered the FOB, we were met with a hero's welcome: twin fecal pyres. The dueling flames licked the air as they spewed black diesel smoke into the sky. I watched as the squad walked past the burning shit like dead ancient warriors entering the great hall of the afterlife. The flames coming off the burning excrement exuded heat waves, the blurred lines of a dream. It sure felt like a dream. The only thing that anchored me to reality was the visceral and primordial smell of shit and fire.

We smoked cigarettes for hours after

the debrief, everyone telling of the near-miss bullets that smacked the stucco just to the left of their faces. We were high on adrenaline and nicotine, but both would wear off. Exhaustion would come like a great flood and wash both away. Zeb was one of the last ones to go back into the hooch. He sat quietly as we all talked, staring at the ground and trying to laugh at the crude jokes and gallows humor that we used as shields. It served as a fragile barrier that we tried to wear against the creeping horror, as thin as cellophane and only slightly stronger. One by one, we went into the hooch, knowing that if we didn't take advantage of the sleep, the moment would pass, and we would be forced to walk the streets in more of a haze than we already operated under.

I walked past Zeb, lightly squeezing his shoulder. Once, later on, Zeb thanked me for saving his life, but I don't know if I did or not. That day, we didn't talk about it at all. Instead, I lay in my rack, trying to keep my eyes open, the red glow of laptop batteries blinking throughout the dark room. I listened as Zeb undressed and slid into his bunk, the metal squeaking as he tried to find

some level of comfort. It started as a whimper like he was trying to cover his mouth and hold it in. Then it became more pronounced. I'm sure he hoped that the dark and exhaustion of the men around him was enough to act as a veil for his tears. He must have felt like he let us all down; he had stared death in the face and frozen when his moment came. I felt terrible for him and knew that I needed to get up, try and talk to him, offer a hug at least. But I gave in to the comfort of the darkness and closed my eyes as a friend suffered. Zeb may have frozen that day, but so did I. It wasn't the bullets I was afraid of; it was the fear that Zeb's tears would wash away my veneer of courage. I was the coward after the bullets stopped.

A dreamless sleep came. We would have another patrol in a couple of hours.

Editor's note: All photos are courtesy of Kacy Tellessen.

Author's bio: Kacy Tellessen was born and raised in Spokane, Wash. He enlisted in the Marine Corps after his high school graduation and deployed to Iraq twice. He is currently a student at Gonzaga University School of Law.

The poster features a background image of a soldier in camouflage on the left and a group of runners on the right. The central text reads "MARINE CORPS HISTORIC HALF" in large, stylized letters, with "REGISTER NOW" below it. To the left is the "SEMPER PARVE" logo with five stars, and to the right is the "DEVIL DOG DOUBLE" logo with a bulldog head. At the bottom, it says "MAY 22, 2022" and "RUN 13.1, 5IVE OR BOTH!". The website "WWW.MARINEMARATHON.COM" and the word "DORAH!" with a cursor are at the bottom left. The "MARINE CORPS MARATHON" logo is at the bottom right.

MCRD San Diego Marks its Centennial

West Coast Base Blends Historic Architecture With the Corps' Modern Mission



One of the first platoons to graduate from the new West Coast Recruit Depot in San Diego, Calif., was 4th Plt, Co C, on Sept. 28, 1923.

By Barbara McCurtis

Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego is celebrating its 100th birthday and its beginnings are quite interesting. Following World War I, San Diego, Calif., was a sleepy border town struggling to establish a stable economic base that would attract new residents and generate prosperity. The main thing the area had going for it was perfect climate.

The city's chamber of commerce, led by a powerful group of local citizens, began courting the Department of the

Navy to select San Diego as its southern Pacific port. Initial efforts were rejected as the Navy did not want to invest in an undeveloped location. The group then began lobbying President Theodore Roosevelt. In 1908, the fleet was passing San Diego on its world tour and the committee made a bold move. They raised more than \$20,000 and chartered a fishing boat to take the mayor and a group of directors 600 miles south to intercept the fleet off the coast of Mexico. They pleaded their case on the foredeck of a battleship, and the admirals agreed to stop outside the bay of San Diego as the harbor was

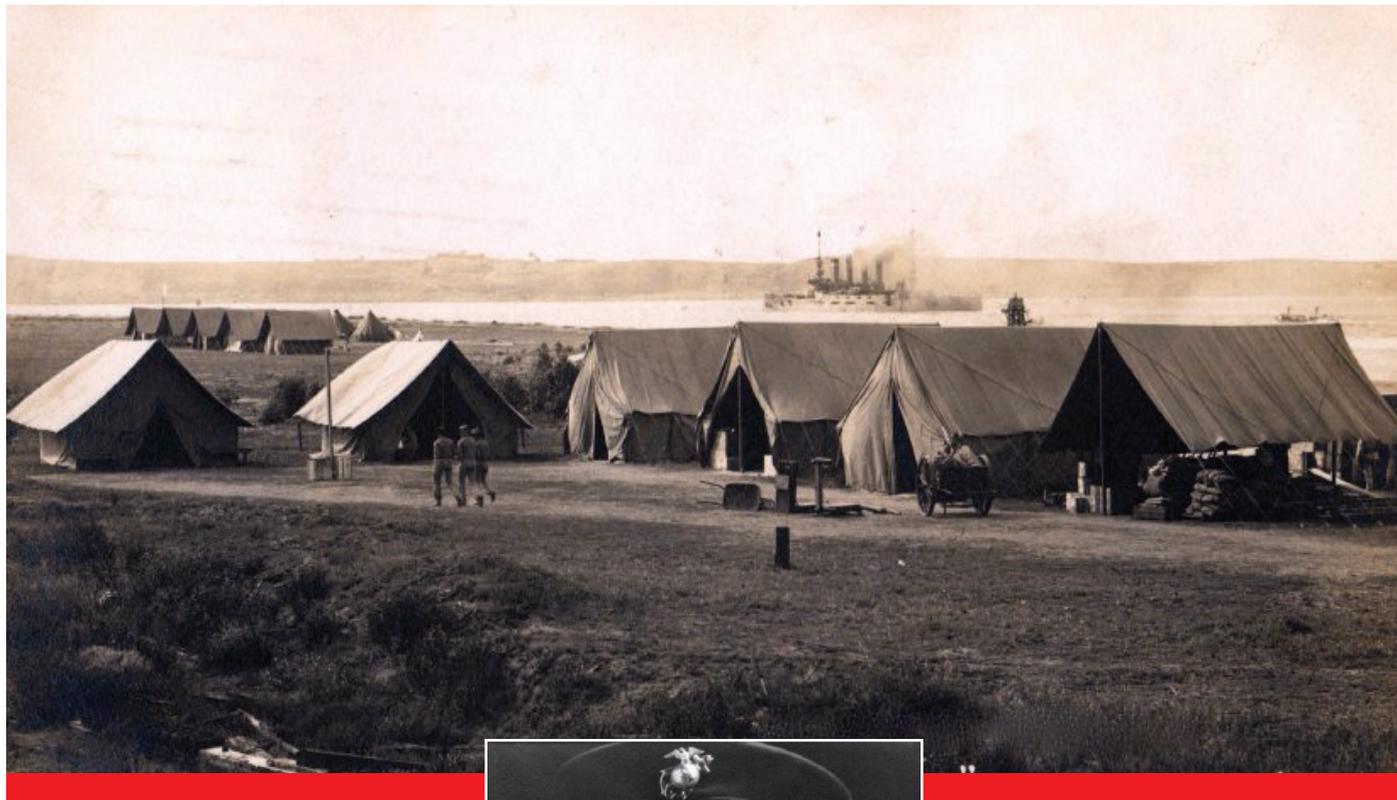
too shallow, narrow and dangerous.

When the fleet landed on April 15, 1908, they were greeted with parades, ceremonies, balls, guided tours, dinners and other functions in the homes of prominent San Diegans. The visit was such a success the group began to pursue opportunities to improve the harbor. Meanwhile, a revolution in Mexico brought the Marines to the area. The United States activated the 4th Marine Regiment to support the existing regime in Mexico. At that time, limited operations had been conducted in many parts of the globe in support of national interests.



CPL BETHANIE C. SAHMS, USMC

Marines aboard MCRD San Diego, Calif., run along Hochmuth Ave., during a 3-mile run to celebrate the Marine Corps Birthday on Nov. 5, 2015.



COURTESY OF THE COMMAND MUSEUM, MCRD SAN DIEGO

In March 1911, the 4th Provisional Brigade, under Colonel Charles A. Doyen, sailed from San Francisco to San Diego where they waited on Navy ships for orders south. After a week of waiting, Doyen and his Marines disembarked on March 20 and set up a temporary camp on North Island they called Camp Thomas, in honor of Rear Admiral Chauncey Thomas, Commander of the Pacific Fleet. North Island was one of two islands that transformed San Diego Harbor from a broad bay, wide open to the Pacific Ocean, into a landlocked harbor on the Pacific Coast. A flat spot of sand and scrub growth, the camp allowed the Marines to conduct physical exercises, close order drill and marches under full packs. Marksmanship training was carried out on a range that had been constructed by First Lieutenant Holland M. Smith.

By the end of May the revolution was over, and the 4th Provisional Regiment was disbanded. In 1912, William Kettner, Director of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, was elected to Congress. Kettner used his new position to find federal funding and eventually persuaded Congress to appropriate \$238,000 to dredge San Diego Harbor. This was an important first step in making San Diego a Navy town.

Trouble with Mexico occurred again in 1914, and the 4th Regiment was in camp on North Island under the command of Colonel Joseph H. Pendleton. Col



USMC

BGen Joseph H. Pendleton served as the first commanding officer of MCRD San Diego from March 1 to June 1, 1921.

Pendleton saw San Diego as a strategic point for the Marines to train and embark quickly for expeditionary duty. He was not alone in this idea; Marine officers had been recommending a permanent advance base regiment since 1911.

In camp on North Island, Col Pendleton took every opportunity to generate support for the Marine Corps. Interested in local affairs, he rarely turned down an invitation to attend civic functions. He held an open house every Tuesday and Thursday and hosted the regiment parade for public viewing.

Pendleton's presence in the city is

well-documented in the photographs of the Panama California International Exposition as well as more than 15 articles written on him in the local newspapers. He was sought after as a speaker for civic engagements and soon became a close associate of local leaders to include Congressman Kettner, who became a strong advocate for a permanent Marine Corps installation in San Diego. Before and during the exposition, Kettner prepared the city for new military installations when he deepened the harbor and added a coal wharf and fuel oil station and a Navy radio station in Point Loma.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, inspected the area in April 1914 and recommended San Diego as the site for an advanced base. His proposal was approved and the 4th Regiment, ordered ashore at San Diego for an indefinite stay, became the nucleus of the West Coast advance base force. The Marines remained in Balboa Park after the Panama-California Exposition ended, and leased buildings that were part of the exposition and used them for barracks, work spaces and offices.

The 1916 Naval Appropriation Act approved \$250,000 to purchase 232 acres of tidal land abutting Dutch Flats, where the San Diego River frequently emptied into San Diego Bay. Dutch Flats was a low-lying marsh near downtown that was covered with water at high tide. Congressman Kettner had a home that



LCPL ANTHONY D. PIO, USMC

Marines of "Fox" Co, 2nd Recruit Training Bn, stand in formation during a graduation ceremony at MCRD San Diego, Jan. 15, 2021.

overlooked the eyesore that was Dutch Flats, and he convinced Pendleton that Dutch Flats was the perfect spot for the Marine base. The San Diego airport was also in Dutch Flats. The airport would be dedicated in 1928, but by 1934 it was crowded with two flying schools; United, American and Western Airlines; Ryan

Aircraft and the Marines. Located in the center of the city, the airport's proximity to downtown gives it little room to expand due to lack of land space and the environmental impact of neighboring communities.

May 15, 1917, reported that Congress had appropriated \$250,000 to pay for the

land for the Marine base. On Dec. 1, 1921, Col Pendleton raised the flag and the base officially opened. The new San Diego base was the Marine Corps' first purpose-built installation. Prior to this, Marines were tenants in Navy Yards or occupied former Army or Navy installations and either expanded or remodeled them for their own purposes. The architect for the new base was Bertram Goodhue, the principal designer for the Panama-California Exposition buildings in Balboa Park.

The original land parcel that abutted Dutch Flats was 232 acres. Eleven different land acquisitions from 1916 to 1942 state the base acquired 890 acres. In 1948 the Marines relinquished 245 acres to the airport for construction of a new terminal. The proximity to the airport has created what one commanding general referred to as the San Diego Pause; that interval of time when multiple planes are taking off and individuals speaking outdoors must stop speaking.

Goodhue's original plan for the base used the Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture featured in the exposition and called for 46 buildings according

Dutch Flats was chosen as the site of the future MCB San Diego, Calif., in 1917.



COURTESY OF THE COMMAND MUSEUM, MCRD SAN DIEGO

to a *Los Angeles Times* report in 1919. The barracks would be linked by a great arcade facing the parade ground; secondary structures would form a long axis behind the arcade creating a series of courtyards. Six major support buildings and small utility structures were completed from 1922 to 1923. During the 1920s and 1930s, the primary function of the base was supporting Marine Corps expeditionary operations. In August of 1923 that changed when the Marine Corps Recruit Training Depot for the West Coast relocated from Marine Barracks, Navy Yard on Mare Island.

The first group of recruits arrived in San Diego on USS *Sirius* (AK-18). Major E.P. Moses was the officer in charge of recruit training. At that time, the recruit depot had three departments: the recruit detachment, which consisted of all the recruits in training; the personnel section; and the recruit depot detachment which was made up of the depot's permanent personnel and Sea School. The 4th Regiment, nicknamed "San Diego's Own," was serving on expeditionary duty and did not return to San Diego until 1924.

In 1924, the base was redesignated Marine Corps Base, Naval Operating Base, San Diego and served as the headquarters



COURTESY OF THE COMMAND MUSEUM, MCRD SAN DIEGO

Above: A Marine Corps Women's Reserve battalion color guard aboard MCB San Diego, Calif., during the 1940s.

for Observation Squadron One, the oldest organized air unit in the Marine Corps. Aircraft were stationed across the bay at North Island Naval Air Station at Coronado, Calif. An emergency expansion of the base began in September 1939 with construction of 27 new storehouses, a defense battalion barracks, mess facilities, hundreds of 16-man prefabricated metal huts for the recruit depot, post exchange, recruit parade ground, neuro-psychiatric building, dental and dispensary quarters, new roads, and a railroad. When the Department of the Navy authorized the Marine Corps Women's Reserve in 1942, several buildings were constructed to house and support female Marines. The first Woman Reserve (WR) officer assumed her duties the week of Sept. 25 and by the end of 1943, 187 WRs were stationed on base. When World War II ended, the base focused on demobilization for thousands of Marines returning from the Pacific. WW II had a significant impact on the area; by 1942 San Diego's population swelled so much in a single year that it surpassed the projected population growth for the next two decades. A large portion of the new arrivals were military personnel and their families.

In 1948 recruit training became the



COURTESY OF THE COMMAND MUSEUM, MCRD SAN DIEGO

Recruits clean rifles along the Quonset hut area on MCRD San Diego in the 1960s.

principal tenant, and the base was re-designated Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. The Korean War in the 1950s resulted in a need for housing for returning reserve Marines and new recruits. Tents were assembled on the parade deck for billeting, and the base also built hundreds of Quonset huts. The 270 corrugated galvanized steel huts were in the western area of the base with 180 additional huts located adjacent to the parade deck. Each hut housed 24 recruits.

The depot also served as a staging area for reserve Marines recalled to active duty for the Korean War. The Marines were quickly processed through medical, legal and administrative procedures on and then transported to Camp Pendleton to join new units. The units would eventually be shipped out from San Diego's Broadway pier as they had during WW II. Col Pendleton's foresight for the base to be quickly able to support expeditionary needs had proved true.

President John F. Kennedy visited the base on June 6, 1963. A pair of brass footprints were created on the site where he stood, with his feet at a 45-degree angle, just as Marine recruits stand on the yellow footprints at the start of recruit training. Dating back to at least June of 1963, generations of recruits have started their Marine Corps training by standing on the yellow footprints painted outside the receiving building at the Recruit Training Regiment.

The rapid construction of facilities for recruits occurred on the depot during WW II, Korea and Vietnam. In 1967, construction began on the first two of five new permanent "H-style" barracks. Each barrack was three stories high and was designed to house 900 recruits. The depot used the Quonset huts and tents to house the large number of men reporting due to the draft before the barracks were completed.

The end of the Vietnam War and subsequent fewer recruits in training meant changes on the depot. In 1972, the final H-style barracks were completed, and 242 Quonset Huts were demolished two years later. In 1976 the correctional facility was demolished, and Recruit Training Regiment moved into offices on the arcade vacated after Communication and Electronic School moved to Twentynine Palms in 1975.

The depot has had as many as five Marine Corps schools as tenants over the years. Sea School was a tenant from 1921 until its closure in December 1987. In 1965, Field Music School consolidated with a like unit at Parris Island. Recruiters School was established on Parris Island in 1947 and San Diego opened its school



LCPL GRACE J. KINDRED, USMC

Recruits with Alpha Co, 1st Recruit Training Bn, during receiving at MCRD San Diego, Dec. 29, 2020.

in 1971. The two schools eventually were consolidated in San Diego in 1972. Both depots have had their own drill instructor schools since WW II.

The needs of the Marine Corps have always ruled the demolition and construction of buildings and tenant commands on the depot. In 1976 the depot was redesignated Marine Corps Recruit Depot and Western Recruiting Region after the addition of the recruiting headquarters. Women were no longer in separate companies and the new enlisted barracks model of two person rooms was developed. By 1985, the Women Marine

and Staff Noncommissioned officer barracks were demolished.

In 1987, Headquarters Marine Corps directives increased recruit training in support of basic warrior training. General Alfred M. Gray, the 29th Commandant, was looking for more meaningful physical exercises such as forced marches and confidence courses.

In 1988 the base opened a Command Museum and to this day, the recruits receive history classes taught by docents, most of whom are retired Marines. The docents use the displays in the museum to reinforce Marine Corps history lessons.



COURTESY OF THE COMMAND MUSEUM, MCRD SAN DIEGO



COURTESY OF THE COMMAND MUSEUM, MCRD SAN DIEGO

Recruits participate in one of the many events during the Crucible, the final challenge during recruit training, at Edson Range, Camp Pendleton, Calif, in 1996.

Recruits demonstrate the four firing positions used during range qualification at Camp Matthews Rifle Range in 1942.

New Marines escort their families through the museum retelling the history they have learned from the docents on every Family Day.

In 1991, 25 buildings aboard the base were added to the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the buildings, 110 acres of land including the parade grounds, was delineated the Historic District. The depot was nominated for the register because of the significant architecture and the arcade, a covered walkway north of the parade ground, more than 1 mile long that contains nearly half of the buildings. Other historic places include the commanding general's residence and garage, four married officer's quarters and garages, the depot disbursing office, Headquarters and Service Battalion headquarters, the Command Museum, and the Recruit Training Regiment headquarters.

In 1996, the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Charles C. Krulak, established "The Crucible." Gen Krulak called the Crucible "the defining moment in a young Marine's life." It is a grueling test every recruit must pass to earn the title "Marine." The Crucible and rifle range training for recruits are conducted at Weapons Field Training Battalion which is part of the Recruit Training Regiment but located on Camp Pendleton.

Rifle range training for recruits had been conducted on Marine Corps Base San Diego which was about 13 miles north of San Diego and built by the Marines in 1916. In 1942 the Secretary of the Navy redesignated it as Camp Calvin B. Matthews. Progressive and continuing

growth of the city of San Diego in the vicinity created hazardous conditions and in August 1964 the property was transferred to the Regents of the University of California. Rifle range training was relocated to Weapons Training Battalion at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and formally dedicated as the Edson Range Area Sept. 21, 1965.

Recruits are bused to Weapons Field Training Battalion in their second phase of training for rifle qualification. They live on the base for two weeks and return to San Diego to start the next phase of training. In the last phase of recruit training, recruits are again transported to Weapons Field Training for the Crucible. One distinctive aspect of the MCRD



MSGT DANIEL BALDERAS, USMC

Marines attending Recruiters School at MCRD San Diego, Calif., undergo an inspection prior to graduation.



CPL BROOKE C. WOODS, USMC

After almost 13 weeks of training, Marines of Echo Co, 2nd Recruit Training Bn, prepare to reunite with their loved ones during Family Day at MCRD San Diego, Calif., Dec. 13, 2013.

San Diego Crucible is “The Reaper,” the grueling steep ridge of rugged terrain that recruits hike carrying 55-pound packs to conclude the event.

New facilities constructed in the early 2000s have energy efficient designs that save money. Physical training fields feature artificial turf cutting down on water use. In September 2007 a new 47,360 square foot Recruit Clothing Issue facility consolidated five facilities in one location. The building has four uniform alteration bays, phase lines for clothing issue, administrative offices for staff, a high-bay warehouse, and a DI lounge.

In 2009 construction of two new barracks, a recruit rehabilitation facility, and several independent restrooms were planned as part of the Grow the Force Initiative. The project was part of \$175 million awarded to MCRD to upgrade facilities. The upgrades allow the Department of Defense to utilize the base in the case of a large war or natural disaster. The new barracks were designed with “Black/Grey” water recycling, energy saving electronic monitoring systems, separate laundry facilities and a local area network.

Major changes also have affected the training schedule with the start of inte-

grated training in 2020. Three female Marines completed DI school at MCRD San Diego for the first time in December, 2020. In February 2021 the first female recruits reported for training and graduated in May. The second integrated class started training Oct. 29, 2021 and is scheduled to graduate Jan. 21, 2022.

Integrated training and new efficient facilities are signs of the future. That they take place on this space created 100 years ago is a blend of old and new. The San Diego Chamber of Commerce was seeking a new path for the city in 1911 when it pursued the Navy. When the exposition broke ground in 1911, San Diego was an optimistic, progressive metropolis of almost 40,000 people.

The chamber of commerce directors were correct: military bases produce positive economic impact. Military-related spending in San Diego County grew by 5.4 percent in 2021. An annual report released by the San Diego Military Advisory Council reported that government spending associated with the defense industry in San Diego amounts to 25 percent of the local economy. That same report claimed almost 350,000 jobs can be attributed to the defense industry.

About 23 percent of the total labor force in the region works, directly or indirectly, in service of the military.

The relationship between MCRD San Diego and the surrounding community has changed over the years. Urban encroachment has been held at bay yet remains in the background. Friday parades are still popular with visitors. Training methods may change, but the mission of making Marines remains. The iconic architecture of Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego is a historic place, one that echoes with the memories of 100 years of marching feet and cadence calls.

Author’s bio: Barbara McCurtis served in the Marine Corps from 1976-1998, retiring as a first sergeant. She earned a bachelor’s degree in journalism and worked for a weekly paper. After earning a master’s degree in public history, she was a curator for the San Diego Hall of Champions Sports Museum and served as the director of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot Command Museum. Prior to retirement in 2018, she was the MCRD Historian and the History Inspector for the Commanding Generals Inspection Program. 🇺🇸

New ARQ is Now Standard Throughout the Corps

The Corps' new annual rifle qualification (ARQ) course of fire, designed to provide a more realistic and "train like you fight" environment, has now fully replaced the previous Table 1 and Table 2 qualification course of fire as of Oct. 1, 2021.

Beginning in 2016, the Marine Corps set to work restructuring its annual marksmanship training, improving the program to increase the proficiency of Marines. The new course of fire is designed to mimic more realistic combat conditions by focusing on increased lethality and positional shooting. Over the last five years, Weapons Training Battalion, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., developed, tested and improved the Marine Corps' new course of fire with assistance from the Fleet Marine Force. The ARQ is now

the standard for all Marines outside of entry-level training.

"This is a transition that we've been working on over the course of the last year," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Darryl Peterson, the marksmanship training division director for Headquarters & Support Battalion, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. "We've had multiple iterations of train-the-trainer for the annual rifle qualification concept of employment and the actual course of fire itself."

Like marksmanship training in the past, Marines will still receive a period of instruction to re-familiarize themselves with the fundamentals of marksmanship and what to expect downrange. Each marksmanship training unit is in charge of creating a new lesson plan for their units.

"Our unit has had to make a lot of

adaptations for the new course of fire," said Sergeant Anthony Scott, the Marksmanship Training Unit (MTU) noncommissioned officer in charge for H&S Bn, MCB Camp Pendleton. "We're doing as much as we can to better prepare the Marines, whether it's just getting familiar with the fundamentals of the drills, getting familiar with the barrel flex and how everything works or just getting used to the physical fitness that's required to complete this course of fire."

During "grass week," Marines are shown how to properly use the newly implemented barricades, practice new positions and use dry firing techniques to prepare for the time limits given for the new drills. Each of these drills focuses on increasing the realistic shooting experience for the Marines, allowing for maximum proficiency during their ARQ.



LCPL KERSTIN ROBERTS, USMC

Cpl Matthew Hottinger fires an M16A4 service rifle during pre-qualification for the new annual rifle qualification at Range 116A, MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Oct. 27, 2021. The new qualification features a three-day course of fire emphasizing lethality and positional shooting.

Marines engage targets during the pre-qualification portion of the new annual rifle qualification at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Oct. 27, 2021.

Marines head downrange for three days after grass week, a departure from the previous ARQ, which allowed for five days on the range. The consolidated course saves time and increases efficiency, ensuring that Marines are proficient with their rifles.

On the first range day, Marines will zero their rifles, then conduct the drills required for the ARQ. The reversed distance and options of shooting positions are explicitly designed to mimic real-world combat scenarios through increased variables that would be expected in a combat environment.

“It benefits the Marine Corps in the sense that it employs the Marines in a more tactical mindset or develops the mindset of a tactical Marine,” said Peterson. “There’s shooter preference from each of the firing positions. There’s options for the Marine to take up just like in combat or engagement. They’ll have the option to employ their weapon from the standing, kneeling or prone, based on shooter’s preference, at each yard line instead of being told that they need to be standing, kneeling or sitting.”

As for days two and three, Marines start at the 500-yard line and work their way down the range. On day two, Marines will be conducting their prequalification and day three will be qualification. The prequalification day is the Marines’ last chance to ensure they correctly execute the techniques and methods taught by their coaches. All final preparations must be made to the equipment to enable success on qualification day.

On day three, the Marines shoot for their annual score and rely heavily on their training to succeed. It is anticipated that since the ARQ is new, there will be a decrease in expert scores as Marines adapt to the new requirements.

“I can tell you that Marines are enjoying it a lot more than the [previous system],” said Peterson. “We have had statistics that show that the majority of the populace qualify as sharpshooters as opposed to larger numbers of experts. We have also seen a reduction in unqualified Marines. With the reduction of unqualified Marines, they are obviously taking to the course of fire itself and increasing their accuracy in employing their weapons system.”

Adaptation has long been a tenet of the Marine Corps and adapting annual marksmanship training to be more realistic allows every Marine to be more tactically



LCPL KERSTIN ROBERTS, USMC

proficient regardless of military occupational specialty. Every Marine is a rifleman, and now, with the new standard, Marines will continue to develop these crucial skills and remain ready for whatever challenge arises next.

LCpl Kerstin Roberts, USMC

Guam Cultural Resources Team Receives Environmental Award

On Oct. 28, 2021, the Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz Guam Cultural Resources Team (GCRT) received the 2021 Secretary of the Navy Environmental Award for Cultural Resources Management Individual or Team for providing innovative solutions to project management, employee development, and ongoing mitigation efforts during the responsible buildup process of MCB Camp Blaz.

The team is made up of Naval Facilities Engineering Systems Command (NAVFAC) environmental specialists, engineers and archaeologists assigned to Joint Region Marianas and MCB Camp Blaz for the implementation of the 2011

Programmatic Agreement and Marine Corps relocation to Guam.

“The cultural resources team has been essential to the responsible construction of Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz,” said Colonel Christopher Bopp, the commanding officer of the base. “Camp Blaz is the first Marine Corps base that has been built in over 60 years, which comes with many unique challenges. The collaborative efforts of the GCRT have saved money, improved efficiencies and mitigated impacts to the environment.”

The award nomination letter identified several of the team’s accomplishments related to the oversight and management of more than 50,000 acres of land and 247 square miles of water, located on the islands of Tinian, Farallon de Medinilla and Guam.

For example, the GCRT identified useful trees and medicinal plants at future construction sites and later donated them to the public. More than 160 trees were transferred to the government of Guam for distribution to local artisans and more



STANLEY JAMES

The Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz Guam Cultural Resources Team, pictured here at Tarague Overlook, Guam, Oct. 28, 2021, received a 2021 SecNav Environmental Award for Cultural Resources Management Individual or Team for providing innovative solutions to project management, employee development, increased transparency and ongoing mitigation efforts during the responsible buildup process of MCB Camp Blaz.

than 100 native plant specimens were collected by medicinal practitioners.

The team also was awarded for increased transparency and outreach. Archaeologists on the team participated in numerous site visits, providing updated information about cultural resource management activities to environmental conservationists, members of the government and key stakeholders.

Additionally, the GCRT hosts an annual public affairs workshop to discuss progress and changes from the preceding year. This creates an open forum with the local government and key stakeholders to identify issues that need to be resolved, discuss possible solutions and improve processes.

“The work the cultural resources team has done is top notch,” said Al Borja, NAVFAC Marianas environmental director, MCB Camp Blaz. “In terms of management actions, we’re a leader in the industry. We’re also committed to developing our team members to ensure our future actions continue to meet the same high standards of cultural resource management.”

MCB Camp Blaz will continue to work with its partners by exchanging information and implementing deliberate, cooperative measures during the responsible buildup process.

Stanley James

MEU Develops Decision Makers Through Wargaming

In the Commandant’s Planning Guidance, General David H. Berger writes, “Wargaming needs to be used more broadly to fill what is arguably our greatest deficiency in the training and education of leaders: practice in decision-making against a thinking enemy.” Recently, the

22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit worked to achieve this goal, by incorporating history-based wargaming into the unit’s already existing reading and professional military education (PME) program.

During the fall of 2021, the 22nd MEU staff read and discussed the book “Guadalcanal” by Richard Frank. The purpose of this particular PME was to improve the



CPL YONNIA GUYETTE, USMC

Marine officers assigned to the 22nd MEU conduct a wargaming scenario aboard USS *Kearsarge* (LHD-3), Oct. 22, 2021.

MEU staff's understanding and appreciation for multi-domain operations and the single naval battle concept. Guadalcanal was seen as an ideal case study in both of these areas while also providing an opportunity to study a critical chapter in Marine Corps history. While the reading and discussion portion of this PME was in progress, the unit decided to try and incorporate wargaming into the learning continuum. The commanding officer of the 22nd MEU, Colonel Paul Merida, had seen this done by one of his professors at the Marine Corps War College and wanted to replicate the experience within the unit's PME program.

A brief period of research led to what appeared to be the right game to achieve the objective: "Axis & Allies: Guadalcanal."

"Believe it or not, there's a couple dozen different Guadalcanal wargames out there," said Merida. "We settled on this one because it looked like it got at the multi-domain aspect of the campaign. Plus, the Axis & Allies family of games is somewhat familiar to many, so it likely wasn't going to be too difficult or time consuming to learn how to play."

Over the course of the next few months during two of the MEU's predeployment "at-sea" periods aboard USS *Kearsarge* (LHD-3), the MEU staff spent several nights playing the game, which incorporates air, land and naval forces with the objective of achieving victory within a single naval campaign across several domains. The game required the players to make dozens of decisions regarding the employment of forces, the timing and sequencing of operations, as well as how

to logistically sustain those operations. Most importantly, none of this was done in a vacuum—players were operating against a "thinking enemy" who was just as committed as they were to winning.

"When I was a Marine officer instructor at [University of California Los Angeles] and [University of Southern California], I quickly realized how wargames offered super high-fidelity learning opportunities that simply could not be achieved in a traditional reading and lecture alone," explained Captain Nicholas Patitsas, 22nd MEU adjutant. "When you play a wargame, you make decisions in a span of hours that might take weeks in a formal exercise," he added, explaining that off-the-shelf commercial wargames like Axis & Allies allow commanders and staff to test their ideas and decision-making skills.

Patitsas also noted the importance of the games in preparation for the MEU's upcoming deployment. He explained how wargaming allowed the 22nd MEU leaders to practice critical thinking skills and how they can practice observing situations they may encounter in the future. He said when facilitated well, wargames can provide a deep experiential learning opportunity.

Col Merida believes the exposure to wargaming is developing his leaders to respond to situations more efficiently.

"These types of games force us to make tough decisions and it's not enough to just make the first decision; you need to develop the ability to assess and update your estimate of the situation, then formulate another decision and then repeat the process again and again. You also need the ability to recognize when your plans aren't working and ask yourself, 'OK,

now how do I fix this?' Adapt, and keep moving forward. We need to assume that the enemy is always adjusting during the fight, and we need to do the same but only faster and more efficiently."

Editor's note: The Marine Corps Association Foundation has expanded its professional development programs to include some wargame options for Marine Corps units. For more information or to request wargame resources for your unit, visit <https://mca-marines.org/request-a-wargame/>.

Cpl Yvonna Guyette, USMC

Corps Activates Newest Cyber Defense Unit

The Marine Corps has activated a new unit of cyber warriors in New Orleans, La., to combat the ever-increasing threats in cyberspace and help unify all cyber operations across the Corps. Each day, adversaries are disregarding traditional boundaries in attempts to disrupt and degrade communications and steal critical defense information. The new Network Activity Reserve (NetAct-Res) is responsible for hardening, defending and countering those threats for the reserve component.

"Every future armed conflict will involve contesting over cyberspace in one aspect or another," said Arthur Ross, the director of NetAct-Res. "Whether the Marine Corps is conducting defensive cyberspace operations (DCO), offensive cyberspace operations (OCO) or defense information network (DODIN) operations, we are constantly looking at ourselves and asking how we can do better. We're



CPL YVONNA GUYETTE, USMC

To increase proficiency in real-time decision making while at sea, Marines with the 22nd MEU aboard USS *Kearsarge* (LHD-3) used history-based wargame "Axis & Allies: Guadalcanal" to practice decision-making skills during the fall of 2021.

already looking towards what the fight will look like in 2030. As the terrain in cyberspace changes, we'll change with it."

Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command (MARFORCYBER) stood up NetAct-Res during a ceremony at Marine Corps Support Facility New Orleans, Nov. 1, 2021. Instead of operationally reporting to Marine Forces Reserve (MARFORRES), this new unit will fall under the command and control of Marine Corps Cyberspace Operations Group (MCCOG), MARFORCYBER, in order to streamline and standardize operations globally under U.S. Cyber Command.

"When the unit is initially staffed, it will consist of a combination of 43 active-duty MARFORCYBER Marines, 23 Government Service civilians and 118 contractors" said Major Vincent Sapeda, the executive officer of NetAct-Res. "These 184 people are all currently MARFORRES personnel and are being moved under the command of MARFORCYBER."

The Marine Corps is establishing three network support battalions and three network activities. The network battalions provide general support to each Marine Expeditionary Force, while the network activities are assigned to a geographic region and suited to support nearby establishments, such as MCSF New Orleans, the headquarters of MARFORRES. NetAct-Res is the final network unit to activate.

These six units are being created to clear up command-and-control relationships and secure, operate and defend the Marine Corps Enterprise Network under one commander.

"[NetAct-Res] will ensure information technology services are available to MARFORRES users to the maximum extent possible, so that MARFORRES can prepare forces to augment the active component," said Sapeda. "Also, it will provide ever-present, reliable and secure communications that enable Marines to be ready to fight and win at any time or place."

According to Ross, this consolidation of cyber forces under a single commander is one way the Marine Corps is modernizing its force structure and operations. With the Corps modernizing how it commands and control its enterprise network, NetAct-Res will prevent and counter adversarial cyberattacks and minimize network disruptions and outages in their respective region.

"On a day-to-day basis, NetAct-Res will install, operate, maintain and secure current servers aboard Marine Corps Support Facility New Orleans and ensure reboots take place to install patches to deter any viruses our network may encounter," said Sergeant Carlos Gonzalez, a data systems administrator with MARFORRES.

The Marine Corps Enterprise Network (MCEN) is the network the Marine Corps

uses to provide robust, seamless and secure end-to-end communications for all Marines from the supporting establishment to forward-deployed forces. The Marine Corps plans to enhance the MCEN to better serve the operational forward-deployed forces by improving seamless-ness, reach back, interoperability and security to the Marines back on base.

"In the past, there were seven commanders in eight regions providing command and control of the MCEN," said Sapeda. "There were different processes and techniques to providing MCEN support, depending on which geographic location you were at. This was problematic and at times confusing for our customers and our workforce."

NetAct-Res will support MCOG's mission by executing Marine Corps Defense Information Network and Marine Corps Defense Cyberspace Operations to enhance freedom of action across warfighting domains, while denying the efforts of adversaries to degrade or disrupt this advantage through cyberspace.

"With the ever-increasing reliance on technologies, such as cell phones and computers in our daily and work lives, it is imperative to deny our enemies the use of digital attacks on those networks and in cyberspace," said Sapeda. "It is inherent to our nature as Marines, to seize the initiative."

Sgt Andy Martinez, USMC

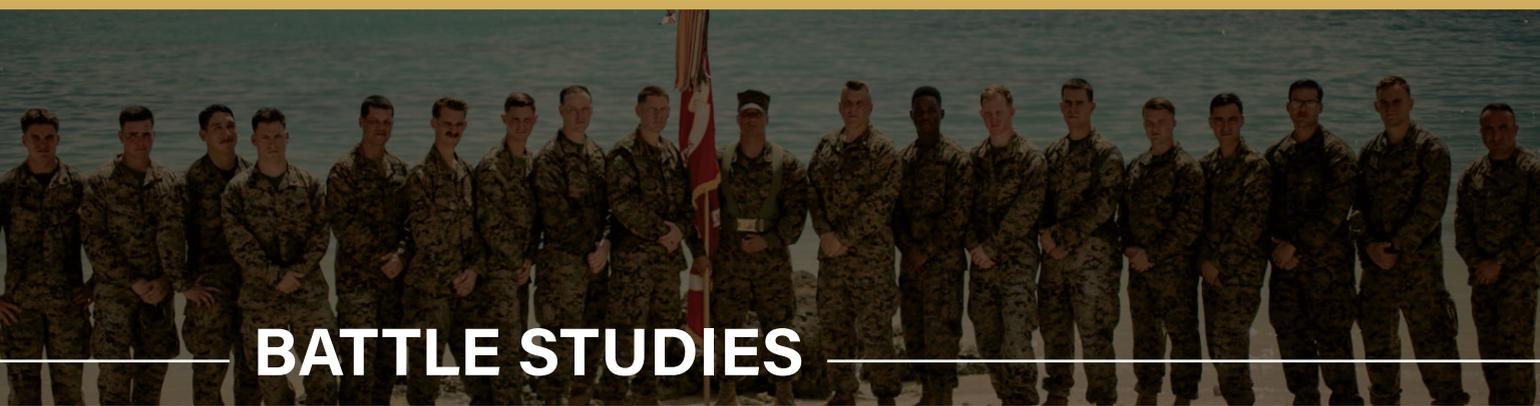


LCPL COLBY BUNDY, USMC

Marines with MCCOG, MARFORCYBER stand in formation during the NetAct-Res activation ceremony at MCSF New Orleans, La., Nov. 1, 2021. The new cyber unit will help enhance freedom of action across warfighting domains while denying the efforts of adversaries to degrade or disrupt this advantage through cyberspace.



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The Country's Opportunity

By
John Edgar
Hoover

A few days ago an acquaintance asked me what I thought of the "veteran problem." "Let's not consider the veteran a problem," I replied. "He is this country's great opportunity, and we can depend upon him to link our present with America's golden future."

My friend agreed, and others have expressed the same sentiments. In fact, I believe that by far the majority of those whose wartime duties have kept them at home feel that way. You who have served and are still serving in answer to our country's urgent call may now realize how earnestly your nation wants you back and how badly we need you.

Things have not been the same since you went away. But the knowledge that you are coming back has brightened our homes and boosted our morale. Those who already have arrived are responsible for a surge of joy which is sweeping the nation. The faithful who have waited, with courage matching your own, share the ecstasy of every reunion. As you come back home in increasing numbers, America really is beginning to live again.

Adjustments to peacetime living will be necessary for us all. They are the fruits of victory. The responsibility for making these adjustments is shared by you and the civilian. We must work together as we have done to win the war, keeping in mind our sacred responsibility to the memory of those who died so that we could live as a free people.

I do not cherish the silly idea that most men and women of the armed services will become "problem children." I agree with the philosophy of those who have seen service and who say, "Just give us a chance, Brother, and see how quickly we can get back to being and acting like civilians."

The doleful predict that we shall require armies of psychoanalysts and other experts to handle individual veteran problems on a large scale. But I believe that our returning service men and women just want an opportunity to act normally. They desire to take up where they left off when the call to arms

came and let GI Joe revert quietly to John Q. Public.

Americans are not, by nature, warlike. This fine attribute will simplify the matter of restoring the veterans of World War II to their proper places in civilian society. For the veteran is a citizen who saw his duty, did it, and is now back where he prefers to be.

You know as well as I that a few pessimistic souls are forecasting an orgy of murders and other crimes when the veterans get home. Such thinking is a dastardly libel on the men who have done the dirty work in winning the war. It desecrates the memory of your buddies who cannot rise up from beneath their white crosses and come back home. I know that you have been taught to kill. You have killed quickly and efficiently because it was necessary and not because you enjoyed it. But you are glad it is over. You don't want to kill any more; you don't even want people to talk to you about it. You are anxious to forget what you have learned about the art of killing when you return to civilian life.

FBI agents and other law enforcement officers also are taught how to kill. But no one considers the retiring law enforcement officer more dangerous because of his experience or training. So we should not be concerned over the average veteran because he has squeezed a trigger as his sights rested on a German enemy, or has slipped up on a Japanese in a jungle and has let him have it the silent way.

I do not mean to give the impression that we shall have no problems. In every group—doctors, lawyers, educators or any other you can name—there are a few weaklings. The same is true of the tremendous segment of our population which made up our armed might at its peak. These few are too weak of character to abide by the laws which have been

enacted for the general good of society. But those who will cause the chief trouble would have been problems without the war. The strain of battle and the inability of some to accept discipline already have made weaknesses apparent



J. Edgar Hoover

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NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

Every returning veteran has a right to expect a chance to work and by his work provide a decent living for himself and his family. We are happiest when we are busy.

in a few. Some others will crack up under the excitement and the responsibility of getting back to normal.

My optimism over prospects for the ready and orderly assimilation of the veteran into our peacetime society is based on more than hope.

I have observed thousands of Marines and other service personnel enjoying weekend liberty in Washington and elsewhere. The conduct of these men and women in uniform has been impressively good. They have behaved themselves, enjoying dancing, the company of other young people, sightseeing and additional wholesome activities. I happened to be on the West Coast when the announcement came that the fighting had ceased in the Pacific. There was much thoughtless and some dangerous activity, but I noticed specifically that the men with the most ribbons on their chests were not participating in the reckless acts.

Another sound reason for optimism is our experience after the first World War. The pessimistic expected a gigantic wave of veteran crimes, but it did not develop. And it will not this time if the country provides adequate jobs for those who are leaving the armed services.

Every returning veteran has a right to expect a chance to work and by his work provide a decent living for himself and his family. We are happiest when we are busy, and the strain of long periods of enforced idleness can prove too much for the resistance of persons who otherwise never would have caused trouble.

It is encouraging to all of us, however, to see the job of reconversion tackled with the same vigor and determination which licked the gigantic problems of the war emergency. Our industrial fortress can perform two miracles instead of one.

Big jobs wait America's attention. Millions of homes must

be built and thousands of miles of highways constructed. Rivers must be dammed and dust bowls converted into prosperous countrysides. Pent-up demands for automobiles, radios, washing machines and countless other necessities of modern comfortable living challenge our ingenuity. But we were less prepared for total war than we are for the adjustments necessary to achieve a more abundant life.

Millions of our young Americans donned uniforms and went away to war with the usual enthusiasm of youth. They are returning with equal enthusiasm for a long, long term of peaceful living. But now they are more mature. They are

fingerprint arrest record in our Identification Division. During the first half of 1945, as compared with the first six months of 1944, there were increases of 4.3 percent in non-negligent killings, 9 percent in rapes, 10 percent in robberies, 12.1 percent in burglaries, 11.3 percent in aggravated assaults, 7.9 percent in larcenies and 4.6 percent in automobile thefts.

Of all those arrested during the first half of 1945, 21.4 percent had not reached the age of 21. More 17-year-olds were taken into custody than any other age group. These figures, based upon fingerprint arrest cards, furnish ample grounds for apprehension. Every law enforcement officer knows that a person finds it much more difficult to behave himself after he has once been in trouble.

The Janes and Bills are not solely to blame for their increased rate of juvenile crime and delinquency. Wartime excitement has produced pressures and strains which some could not withstand.

In many homes, parents have been away so much discharging wartime duties that the youngsters have been deprived of the normal checks and restraints which are so necessary for the proper guidance of adolescents. Others, too young for service but old enough to work, have fallen victim to the unscrupulous who care not how much they degrade a youngster just as long as they get his money.

This trend has been offset by alert and conscientious parents, ably seconded by the churches, schools, youth-serving organizations and law enforcement. But I think it is significant, too, that so many youngsters have gone into the Marines. At the time in life when they would have shown the greatest inclination to get into trouble, these boys have instead found "something to do" by joining the service which has written glorious new chapters into our history during the late war. Thousands of them have shouldered the responsibilities of manhood while their fellows lolled around unsavory joints and dreamed up mischief and crime with the mistaken belief that they were having fun.

Seventeen is a critical age during which youngsters are trying to find out if they "belong." It is fine to train them, particularly along the lines which have made your Corps famous for discipline and morale. A 17-year-old becomes a man when you let him know he is pulling his full load. Although not completely mature, as we count things, who would dare say that a 17-year-old Marine is not doing a man-sized job? And when he returns to civilian life, he will have reason to appreciate the fine effects of the Marine discipline, emphasis on good health habits and general training. No one will ever know how many youngsters have been saved from pitfalls by these fine influences.

The problem of misbehaving juveniles is one which the returning veteran must shoulder with us. There is grave danger that many of today's delinquents will develop into hardened criminals. We must do everything possible to avoid



NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND

Men and women back from the war can and should be influential not only in the field of juvenile problems but in all others involving civic welfare. When they return to their home communities, the veterans should take a real part.

men whose citizenship has been tested and whose faith and loyalty have been demonstrated. They have a keen sense of responsibility and have developed a knowledge of how to discharge duties. Some will be welcomed to old positions. Others will have outgrown the limited requirements of former pursuits, but there will be work to match the ability and resourcefulness of all.

I believe we have a far greater reason to be apprehensive over the "bobby-soxer" and the junior "zoot-suiter" than the veteran. They are the Jane and Bill who have grown up since you went away. The war has been difficult for them because they have found it harder to behave themselves.

During 1944, an estimated 1,393,665 major crimes were committed in the United States. That is at the rate of a major offense every 23 seconds. One out of every 22 persons has a

a recurrence of those fearsome days when there was doubt whether law and order would win out over gangland.

Men and women back from the war can and should be influential not only in the field of juvenile problems but in all others involving civic welfare. When they return to their home communities, the veterans should take a real part in the operation of schools, churches, veterans' organizations and public offices, including law enforcement.

I have noticed that some of our finest and most able returning veterans are rather shy and self-effacing. This modesty is a fine attribute, but to allow a sense of false modesty to prevent full participation in all our civilian affairs would be a tragic loss to our country. Unless the men and women who won the war assert themselves and step into positions of leadership where they are needed, there is danger that the demagogues and professional patriots will crowd in and will be mistaken for persons of true worth. I hope the real heroes of this war will not stand aside for these loud talkers, nor permit them to grab control of affairs they are not competent to manage.

In asserting themselves, the veterans should do so as wide-awake, level-headed citizens who know the value of our American way of life because they fought for its perpetuation. Law enforcement is the protector of American liberties and traditions in war and in peace, so we need your help. There are many vacancies in our ranks which require men of courage, honesty and persistence. Ours is not a high-paying profession, but there is much compensation in the satisfaction of serving.

Those who may not wish to follow the profession have the opportunity to give their active cooperation to honest and competent officers, so that we shall be able to do an even better job. We of the FBI have found daily inspiration throughout the emergency in the fine and unselfish cooperation of loyal Americans everywhere. Many organizations, particularly the American Legion, have contributed unstintingly toward our efforts. We were joined together on the home front against those of our enemies who tried to penetrate our closest defenses and attack from within. The fact that espionage was under control throughout the war and that we had no cases of enemy-directed sabotage during the entire emergency speaks eloquently in any evaluation of the importance of citizen cooperation with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

While the fighting has ended on all fronts, and victory is just as glorious as we knew it would be, we shall be foolish indeed if we expect the enemies of democracy to disappear forever. It is well for us all to remember that citizen complacency prior to the war emergency allowed the growth of dangerous ideologies in our midst. These foreign doctrines and the organizations which sprung from them threatened the very existence of our free government.

I believe we shall have to depend upon the veterans to keep alert for these enemies who work quietly to take advantage of the liberties which they themselves would deny to others. We can be sure our foes will try a comeback, and their goal

will be the destruction of the rights and privileges which you have protected by your personal contribution to our victory.

I realize, of course, that returning servicemen will have individual problems. Some have been disabled for life and others must spend weary months regaining their health. If you happen to be such a veteran, remember that every real American deeply appreciates your sacrifices. Care and assistance most certainly will be provided for those who require it. And we have a similar obligation to the widows and orphans of your buddies who won't come back.

The return to civilian life, however joyous, may present dangers. There are a craven few who are waiting to grab your savings and convert them to their own uses. Many of these scavengers put up convincing stories of great opportunities, but you will find that they always want to operate with your money.

In our work, we have experienced difficulty with operators of fake civil service schools who give the impression of government approval and connection without actually saying so; with operators of "schools" which take a lot of money for a minimum amount of practically worthless specialized training; with impersonators and confidence men promoting

Unless the men and women who won the war assert themselves and step into positions of leadership where they are needed, there is danger that the demagogues and professional patriots will crowd in.



J. Edgar Hoover

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various fraudulent schemes; and other racketeers whose palms itch to get into your pockets.

While peace has brought its problems, they are not problems of the veterans and problems of civilians as separate groups. All of us, as Americans, must stand shoulder to shoulder and solve them as successfully as we did the difficulties of war.

America knows that her fighting men do not want something for nothing. Back from the distant battle zones, you will ask only the opportunity to work and act like normal, law-abiding citizens. We are determined that you shall have this chance. Given it, I am confident that the men and women who won the war will lead our nation onward to an even greater future.



SEA STORY OF THE MONTH

A Night in Tijuana

The year was 1967 and the place was Camp Pendleton. My MOS training had just been completed and I was assigned to 5th Marine Division. Most of my company were old salts who had just returned from Vietnam as part of 1st Amtrac Battalion. They had just spent a year in combat and were looking forward to training the battalion's new Marines to deploy.

The company was eventually broken up with the old salts assigned to a six-month Mediterranean cruise and the rest of us headed to Vietnam. Before our deployment, we were given our last weekend pass, and with a couple of dollars in our pockets, we headed to Tijuana for one last hurrah.

We got to Tijuana in the wee hours on a Saturday morning and spent the entire day drinking and chasing women. About midnight, when most of our money had been spent, we headed back to the border crossing. There was a pedestrian bridge that spans the incoming and outgoing vehicle lanes. Being drunk and stupid, I decided to urinate on the cars below as I stood at the apex of the span. With my friends yelling at me to get over the bridge, I was suddenly grabbed by the Mexican police and hauled off to the infamous Tijuana jail.

A few hours later, the shore patrol showed up to take the military personnel out of the jail and return them to the United States. I was taken to Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego and locked in a second-floor squad bay with a group of similar characters to await

Monday morning transport back to Camp Pendleton and what I suspected would be a court-martial.

In a complete state of panic, I opened the squad bay window, slithered down the rain gutter and walked off base. I hitchhiked back

In a complete state of panic, I opened the squad bay window, slithered down the rain gutter and walked off base.

to Camp Pendleton, told the MPs I had lost my money, ID and pass and was allowed onto base just in time for morning roll call. As I stood there in formation, the lieutenant platoon commander walked down the line and stopped in front of me. He pulled out my ID card and said if I was not already headed for Vietnam, he would have busted me and made sure that my next port of call would have been Vietnam.

I was in-country almost six months when we received a group of replacements. Most of them had been those old salts that had been assigned to a cruise, but instead of going to the Mediterranean, they ended up back in Vietnam.

Sgt Daniel Ceccoli
USMC, 1966-1968
Boca Raton, Fla.

Buzz Bang

I was stationed with Marine Fighter Squadron (VMA)-212 from 1961 to 1963. Marine Corps Air Station Kaneohe Bay's Enlisted Club had the best Mai-Tais in Hawaii. At only 50 cents each, they were also a great bargain. We had a drinking game called "Buzz Bang" that incorporated these rum lovelies. The drink had pineapple slices and little umbrellas which were discarded before starting the game for fear that we could poke out an eye, a distinct possibility during the game. It was a counting game where every number with a six or divisible by a six was a "buzz" and every number with a seven or divisible

by a seven was a "bang." Whoever missed a buzz or a bang had to chug-a-lug his Mai-Tai.

There were usually about a half dozen of us sitting around a table playing. The first guy shouted, "ONE!" then the next guy yelled, "TWO!" and so on until number six would shout, "BUZZ!" and seven would shout "BANG!" Normally we got that far without a chug-a-lug, but things heated up fast by numbers 12 and 14. We rarely got into the upper 20s in a sober state without everybody forgetting how to count or even how to walk. It's a good thing we were within walking distance of our barracks.

One night after a round of Buzz Bang, a new guy we called "Stupid Smith" (for obvious reasons) became convinced that he could fly. After finding his way back to the barracks, he proceeded up to the two-story high flat roof of our barracks which turned out to be a perfect launch pad for him. After getting a running start he soared over the parking lot into a



VMA-212 Marines enjoy some down time at the barracks on Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, in the early 1960s.

COURTESY OF CPL NORM SPILLETH

banyan tree where he spent the night. He made morning muster with nary a scratch. Those Kaneohe “E” Club cocktails were magic.

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

Drill Instructor Dramatics

Pride in the Marine Corps arose from the depths of Corporal P.D. Crockett’s soul. You could see it in his eyes when he was singing “The Marines’ Hymn.” In the summer of 1965, you could hear his voice echoing across Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island’s 1st Battalion. That summer was very hot and humid at Parris Island. While Drill Instructor (DI) Crockett led the troops in training, sweat pored off everyone. He had a unique leadership technique that he used to indoctrinate recruits with discipline.

One day in July, Platoon 135 stood at attention for chow. They looked like the honor guard at their posts in Washington. Then one recruit broke. Private Polanski moved his eyes, which was a big “no, no.” He easily stood out from the others. Cpl Crockett spotted the movement and yelled, “Why are you moving your eyeballs, boy?” Polanski replied, “I don’t know, Sir,” immediately locking his eyes to the foremost. He hollered for Polanski to step up front and stand at attention. Again, he hollered, “You’re not only a screw up, Polanski, you’re a hazard waiting to happen.” Then he ordered Polanski back in line. “Aye, aye, Sir!” said Polanski.

A little later, Polanski was once more in trouble. DI Crockett was out to motivate that boy some way. Everyone was standing tall while Crockett stood at the platoon’s center. Polanski stood, heels locked, at the south end of the squad bay. “Hazard Boy!” yelled Crockett. “Yes, Sir!” “Front and center, on the double!”

“Aye, aye, Sir!” Polanski raced up in front of the DI. “Lock your heels, boy.” “Yes, Sir!” “I can’t hear you, private. Say it louder!” “YES, SIR!” “I still can’t hear you! LOUDER!” “YES, SIR!” “Louder, Hazard Boy!” “Y-E-S, S-I-R!”

Crockett bellowed out close order drill commands to Hazard Boy: “Right face, right face! Left face, left face! About face, about face! Right face, forward march! 1-2-1-2-1-2, mark time, mark, and halt!” Crockett’s deep voice continued the tempo. Polanski once again faced his superior. Crockett read him the riot act on proper attitude. “One more screw up, Hazard Boy, and you’re going to motivation platoon. That 6-foot-6-inch drill instructor will shape your ass up all day ... hundreds of exercises ... running ... standing at attention.” Then Crockett commanded, “About face. Get out of here.”

That July day just happened to be a rain-filled one. “Baker!” yelled Crockett. “Sing us the rain dance song!” “Aye, aye, Sir!”

“Aye, aye, Sir,” and Polanski stood like the Statue of Liberty.

Next came time to harass Pvt William L. Barker. Barker was the platoon house mouse. He was ordered to clean the DI’s living quarters, rifle, shine his shoes, take his uniforms to the laundry, and make fresh coffee. One day, Crockett summoned Barker, “House mouse!” “Yes, Sir!” “Get up here, dammit!” “Aye, aye, Sir!” On the double, Barker stood in front of DI Crockett, who

hollered, “Lock ’em!” “Aye, aye, Sir!” replied Barker.

That July day just happened to be a rain-filled one. “Baker!” yelled Crockett. “Sing us the rain dance song!” “Aye, aye, Sir!” replied the house mouse. “Rain, rain go away; come again some other day. Rain, rain, go away; we want to go out and march today. Rain, rain, go away; come again some other day.” For the house mouse, it was more intimidation.

So went Marine Corps boot camp in the summer of 1965. DI Crockett led in singing, “The Marines’ Hymn” at 10 p.m. Would all recruits look back and recognize a certain dramatic flair in Crockett’s training? Probably. Discipline was the chief virtue. Cpl Crockett developed esprit de corps. That, the entire platoon would remember.

LCpl Ron “Tank” Rotunno
USMC
Masury, Ohio

Some Lessons We Remember Forever

I arrived at MCRD San Diego on July 6, 1966. We were organized into Platoon 3059 and started training almost immediately. After three weeks of boot camp, I was getting into the routine, and I was accepting the fact that I probably would survive another five weeks of torture.

It is hot in San Diego in July. We had a recruit burn his hands doing push-ups on the asphalt during PT. You might remember that we wore skivvy shirts underneath our utility shirts and the utility shirts were buttoned all the way up to our necks. I’m a Nebraska lad and we know how to stay cool in July, so the skivvy shirt was placed in its proper place in my footlocker. I thought I was the coolest and smartest dude in the Corps for the next two weeks.

The next week was the time for uniforms to be sized. Our platoon was in a

giant warehouse standing at attention along the bulkhead of the building. Next came the order to remove our utility shirts. My heart started racing. As I removed my utility shirt, I knew my life was over. There I was, my white-skinned bare chest standing out among 74 other maggots.

Next came the order to remove our utility shirts. My heart started racing. As I removed my utility shirt, I knew my life was over. There I was, my white skinned bare chest standing out among 74 other maggots.

The DI, Sergeant Paddy, was the platoon ass kicker. Sgt Paddy came up on my left shoulder and in a beyond berserk voice asked, “Where in the f*** [is your] skivvy shirt?” Next thing I remember was a blow to my left jaw, seeing stars and my knees buckling.

To this day, I am proud of the fact that I didn’t go down and that I wore a skivvy shirt for the next three years, even in Vietnam. Some lessons we remember forever.

Kim B. Swanson
Bella Vista, Ariz.

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: Patricia Everett, *Leatherneck Magazine*, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or email them to p.everett@mca-marines.org. We offer \$25 or a one-year MCA membership for the “Sea Story of the Month.” 

On a recent return visit to Adak, Alaska, Dr. Barry Erdman looks down at the rack he slept on 41 years ago at the Modified Advanced Airborne Underwater Weapons Complex/Compound barracks.



One Marine's Return to Adak Island, Alaska

By Dr. Barry Erdman

Background

The island of Adak, Alaska, is about 1,250 miles west of Anchorage, and sits in the middle of the Aleutian chain of islands in the Bering Sea. Adak is about 32 miles long and 22 miles wide, and the tallest peak is Mount Moffet at 3,924 feet. Adak's northern portion was formerly a military installation but is now owned and managed by the Aleut Corporation, and the southern portion is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a refuge and preserve.

Adak's climate is austere, harsh and demanding for its inhabitants. Due to the extremely remote location, it was considered a hardship duty station for servicemembers assigned there. Many Navy personnel called it, "The Rock," given the volcanic nature, and it was also well known as "The Birthplace of the Winds."

Due to the island's strategic location, it is replete with American military his-

tory. On Aug. 30, 1942, the U.S. Army came ashore at Kuluk Bay on Adak. The Japanese occupied the nearby islands of Attu and Kiska in the Aleutians in their advancement in the Pacific. To prevent further advancement, Adak was chosen by the United States as a base of operations to launch attacks on adjacent Japanese occupied islands.

Ultimately, a base was set up on Adak that held more than 100,000 American military personnel during World War II. Two separate airfields were constructed along with a seaplane base. American submarines fighting in the Pacific could seek refuge there for resupply and refueling.

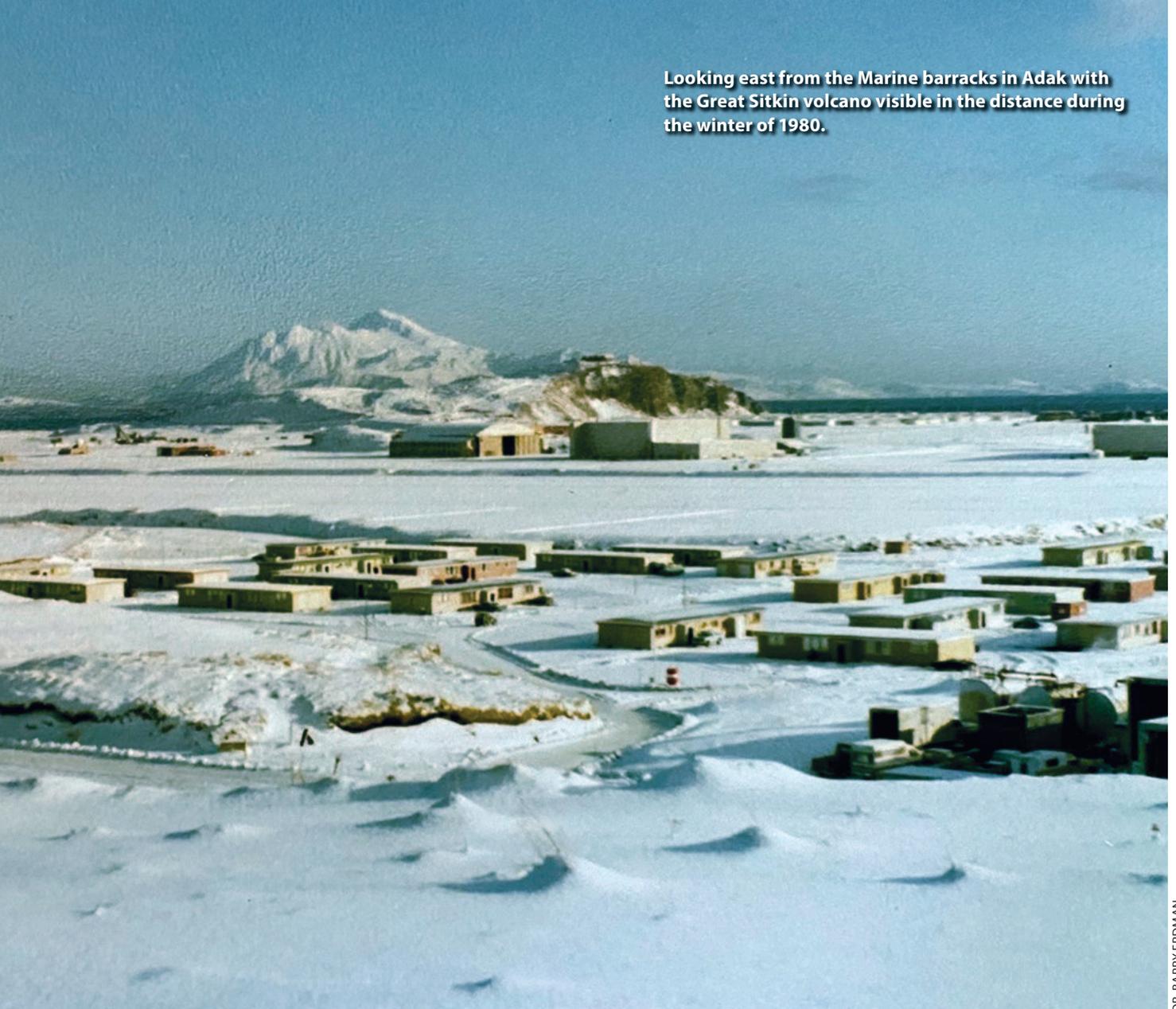
After WW II ended, Adak's strategic importance was diminished, and the base was turned over to the U.S. Navy, becoming Naval Air Station Adak. During the Cold War, Adak once again became a major strategic location, since the Kamchatka Peninsula, a part of the Soviet Union, was only about 450 miles away.

In the 1950s, Adak became a location for fleet communications, listening posts, an underwater sonographic post, and a support base for Navy ships as well as the P-3 Orion, the Navy's anti-submarine patrol aircraft. As the Cold War intensified, so did the need for the strategic placement of weapons of mass destruction, and Adak became a weapons storage facility.

The Marine Corps established a presence on Adak in the 1950s due to the need for base security. The weapons storage facility on Adak was known as the Marine Airborne Underwater Weapons Compound, or to Marines there, "The Pound."

The end of the Cold War and subsequent reduction in the U.S. military and its bases resulted in the closure of NAS Adak in 1997. During the Cold War, there were approximately 6,100 military and civilian personnel on the base. That dwindled to 300 residents pre-COVID-19, with about 62 residents remaining today.

Looking east from the Marine barracks in Adak with the Great Sitkin volcano visible in the distance during the winter of 1980.



DR. BARRY ERDMAN



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Ships of the U.S. Fleet in Adak Harbor, during the 1943 campaign. The fleet included battleships, cruisers, destroyers and amphibious shipping.

The Marines on Adak Island

The Marines' mission on Adak during the Cold War was to provide security at the weapons storage compound and other then-classified military installations on the island, such as Naval Security Group Activity and Naval Facility, both listening posts. The Marines also provided backup security for the island's naval police force as needed.

There were usually 150-160 Marines stationed on Adak who were organized into three platoons—an admin platoon and two guard platoons, called the 1st and 2nd guard platoons respectively.

I was with the 1st Guard Platoon. The commanding officer was a major with a captain as his executive officer and one lieutenant serving as a platoon commander.

The Marine barracks were located on Bering Hill and overlooked Adak City. The top decks housed berthing for the single Marines with administrative



SGTMAJ CHARLES ABLES-USMC (RET)

Above: Garages located behind the Marine barracks were used as the enlisted club, which was appropriately named Tundra Tavern.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Above: Troops at an Army observation post overlooking Kuluk Bay, Adak, watch an approaching “Williwawa” storm, on April 17, 1943. The storm overtook the post within three minutes.



DR. BARRY ERDMAN

U.S. Navy P-3 Orion anti-submarine aircraft on Adak in 1979.

officers on the first deck. They housed some noncommissioned officers and junior Marines, while base housing housed the officers and married and some single NCOs.

In the mornings when the clouds lifted, I had beautiful views of the Alaskan scenery, the rolling bright green tundra hills and snow-covered mountains. The climate was temperate with average 50-degree summers and 30-40 degree average winters, but high winds drove the temperature down. Precipitation was almost daily throughout the year with rain in the fall, spring and summer, and plenty of snow in the winter. On average, there were about five or six days or so of all-day sun in the summer, and when that happened, schools on the island were closed

so the students could enjoy the day.

Snowstorms were frequent and came and went when least expected in the winter. The severe storms were called “Williwaws” by the indigenous Aleuts as the snow would come down horizontally due to wind blasts. These storms were abrupt, without warning, and came and went in an instant. “White-outs” were defined as when you held your arm outstretched and you could not see your hand. These were also frequent in the winter on Adak.

Behind the Marine barracks was the Marines’ enlisted club called Tundra Tavern. The Marine Corps Ball and mess night were always held there. At Tundra Tavern, Marines could unwind when off duty with beer on tap, billiards and pinball

machines. The open garages that housed bus, patrol and armored vehicles and search and rescue tracked vehicles, as well as a small enclosed and well-protected ammo bunker, were also located behind the barracks.

All buildings on Bering Hill could be traversed via a combination of above-ground and underground tunnels which enabled the Marines to reach recreational facilities including the gym, indoor pools, bowling alley and theater in poor weather. Elsewhere in Adak City, below and south-east of the Marine barracks, were multiple specialty hobby buildings.

The weapons compound where we worked was a short distance from the Marine barracks. The guard platoon would be bused to the compound for a one week

The guard platoon would be bused to the compound for a one week stay. The compound itself was shrouded in mystery. None of us young, enlisted Marines actually saw or even knew what we were guarding at the time as it was shrouded in secrecy.

stay. The compound itself was shrouded in mystery. None of us young, enlisted Marines actually saw or even knew what we were guarding at the time as it was shrouded in secrecy. I later learned that we were guarding up to 70 M57 nuclear depth charges which had up to a 10-kiloton capacity each.

The Kamchatka Peninsula of the Soviet Union contained Soviet nuclear ballistic missile submarine bases, and its submarines roamed the Pacific Ocean. The M57 was destined for those submarines in the event of war. The M57 weapon would be released from a P-3 Orion submarine patrol aircraft and set to go off at a certain depth to cause any submarine in a targeted area to implode. Apparently, there was always a Soviet Foxtrot class diesel-electric attack submarine within 5 miles in waters off Adak Island during the Cold War. The P-3 Orion aircraft had a magnetometer probe on its tail to detect the presence of underwater metal anomalies, as well as drop sonobuoys that would float for several days and send signals to the P-3 Orion aircraft to determine sonographically what was lurking below in conjunction with the land-based listening posts on Adak Island.

The weapons compound and adjacent areas on Adak were an exclusion zone where the use of deadly force was authorized. From afar, the compound looked like a well-secured federal prison. The compound had an entrance gate with an adjacent two-story guard tower, an internal as well as external barbed-wire fence enshrouded in layers of razor tape, and an internal “no man’s land” in between. Within the compound, there were three primary structures—the weapons maintenance building, the heavily fortified Marine “mini-barracks” that housed the Marine guard unit, and the weapons ordnance bunkers that contained seven bomb-blast protected doors. The first two bomb bunker blast doors housed the nuclear warheads, and they were ready access in the event of war as a short distance away from the weapons compound. The other five bunkers contained conventional ordnance and ammo and explosives.

The compound was heavily guarded all days and times of the year. There were

always two armed sentries on foot patrol around the immediate inside perimeter of the compound, each armed with an M16A1 machine gun and 200 rounds of ammo, a flak vest, a radio and a pair of binoculars.

The Marine barracks within the compound, where Marine guards would stay for a week at a time, had its own galley, mini-gym and berthing quarters as well as an armory and ammo bunker. It was completely self-contained. There were enough Marines there within the compound to serve as a quick reaction force until reinforcements from the main barracks arrived if needed.

As a Marine Security Unit, we were trained and equipped to ward off a land-based Soviet attack on the compound. More than likely, in the event of a nuclear war, Adak would have been dealt a preemptive first strike itself with a Soviet nuclear weapon, given its strategic location and what was on the island at the time.

Other facilities for which Marines provided security were the National Security Group Activity Complex and Naval Facilities building at the northern parts of the island near Clam Lagoon. These were highly classified listening posts at the time



COURTESY OF DR. BARRY ERDMAN

After leaving Adak in the spring of 1981, then-Cpl Barry Erdman was assigned to 2/8. He’s shown here on USS Trenton (LPD-14) off the coast of Beirut, Lebanon.

with underwater sonographic facilities and extensive computer networks.

We had regular react drills but a Marine never knew a drill from the real thing when a react was called. When a react was called, an off-duty Marine on Adak dropped everything and reported immediately to the barracks, ready to do battle in defense of the weapons compound. During a react, Marines at the primary barracks were assigned to certain check and operational points on the island in full battle rattle. The Marines at the Weapons Compound had their own mission in defense of the complex and the immediate surrounding area.

Training outside the barracks entailed a variety of activities, including rappelling



SGTMAJ/CHUCK ABLES, USMC (RET)

Marines on the range at Lake Andrew at the north end of the island.

at Checkpoint Two and squad close quarters combat training using old WW II Quonset huts and old cabins in the hills of Adak. Combat training with advancements stomping through tundra grass-laden hills was always a work-out, carrying a rifle or heavy machine gun, with full combat gear through tundra grass that can be ankle, then knee, then waist deep.

Range day happened three to four days per year. All weapons were fired at targets positioned in the tundra. When you fire a .50-caliber in the tundra, we called that “toupee shooting,” as when a .50-cal. round impacts tundra grass, a chunk of dirt and tundra grass flies at least 20 feet in the air, straight-up. It looks like a toupee has been blown off of someone’s head. Since the tundra is so thick and the underlying permafrost is soft, mortar rounds did not always go off. Efforts to remove unexploded ordnance are still ongoing.

Adak was a two-year duty station for Marine officers and staff NCOs; however, for the young Marines on Adak, it was a one-year duty station. Many Marines took up bodybuilding or a regular exercise program, became music addicts with elaborate stereo systems procured at the

PX, ventured out hiking and enjoyed the Alaskan landscape, or pursued either a new or existing hobby such as photography at one of many individual hobby facilities that were available on station. Some Marines pursued education opportunities.

When off-duty, a Marine could spend a weekend hunting caribou, fishing for salmon, or spending time at an old cabin or Quonset hut that had been repurposed for leisure. Other options included “tundra-stomping,” which meant hiking the island to various WW II historic sites.

My Story, Then and Now— Adak as it now exists in 2021

I landed on Adak Island in 1979 when I was 17 years old. It was my first duty station in the Corps. I recently returned, over 41 years later, for a five-day visit in August of 2021.

Through the years, I would occasionally think of Adak and wonder what it was like now and how I would react if I returned. The last 10 years or so, I searched many YouTube videos on Adak to try and satisfy my curiosity.

In 2019, I caught up with a childhood friend of mine, Alaska Airlines 737 pilot Fred Ripp. Fred has flown in and out of Adak many times through the years, and

we decided to make the journey together.

Armed with far more wisdom and much more educated, older, well-traveled and experienced in life, I came in with a much different and very positive perspective.

The Aleut Corporation gave Fred and me an unrestricted permit to explore all sites and abandoned buildings and structures that are not privately owned on Adak. We stayed at the Aleut Inn which is repurposed base housing for civilian use. We secured a pick-up truck for the duration there as well. We had to fly in our own food as food is extremely expensive on Adak, and the local store is open only a limited time.

The flight to Adak is nothing like it was when I was 17. Back then, Marines flew in on a Lockheed-Electra turboprop airplane. Now, it’s an Alaska Airlines 737 with all modern conveniences. Passengers on flights to Adak include commercial fisherman crews, caribou hunters, salmon and halibut fisherman, bird watchers and to a lesser extent, civilian contractor workers.

Boarding the flight to Adak from Anchorage, I felt I was taken back in time. The many thoughts and feelings that raced through my mind, coupled with that melancholy feeling, were incredible. The

The barracks as it exists now is just a shell of its former self. The wax polished floors and polished metalwork are long gone, and the rooms are dilapidated and in disarray, now deteriorated and vandalized throughout with broken glass and graffiti.



The view south from Marine Barracks Adak with beautiful mountains in the background in the winter of 1980.

DR. BARRY ERDMAN



SGT MAJ CHUCK ABLES, USMC (RET)



COURTESY OF DR. BARRY ERDMAN

World War II-era equipment could be found throughout Adak in the 1970s and the Marines stationed there enjoyed exploring what was left behind.

During his return visit to Adak Island in August 2021, Erdman holds a sonobuoy shipping canister that was left behind when the base was closed.

three-hour flight from Anchorage gave me plenty of time to gather my many thoughts.

When preparing to land, we circled the island, and I saw bays and outer islands I did not see so long ago. Adak was enshrouded in clouds and a light mist just as it was when I left. Mount Moffit was to the left. I had looked at that beautiful mountain from my window at the barracks every morning I woke up when stationed there, and I marveled looking out at it. The Marine barracks was to the right. From the air, the barracks still looked intact as I remembered. It felt good to see it.

As we landed, the abandonment of the base elements of Adak City became readily apparent. Many Cold War military buildings had been left to the elements. It had an eerie apocalyptic appearance as if the folks here had just gotten up and left.

Fred and I ventured out to the immediate surrounding areas in downtown Adak City. The downtown area was a shell of its former self. Efforts are underway to clear the island of unwanted debris, dangerous structures and contaminated areas that resulted from the military presence, primarily during the Cold War. WW II structures are pretty much long gone. Those that remain have been repurposed for liberty enjoyment, and even those are in marked deterioration and hazardous.

The next morning, we began at Kuluk Bay, the site of the 1942 U.S. Army landings, the beach that we Marines hiked on when I was stationed there, which seems to be unchanged.

The Marine barracks was next on Bering Hill. Bering Hill was eerily quiet but pulling up to the Marine barracks was an altogether different story. The flagpole was still there but flew no flag. The two-

wheeled cannons on each side of the flag are long gone, and missing is the brass plaque on the concrete block pedestal before the flag that said, "Marine Barracks Adak Alaska." The yellow, painted decorative chain fence that surrounded the sidewalk at the front of the barracks by the road is gone. The barracks' cement superstructure is intact, but vandalized, with broken windows and doors ajar.

I ventured through all the floors in the barracks and then the basement. In the basement, the armory and brig had been moved after I left the island, as well as the rooms and offices on that level that

once housed the sergeant of the guard, the lieutenant's office and small gym. The laundry and its machines were still there from later guard platoons.

The barracks as it exists now is just a shell of its former self. The wax polished floors and polished metalwork are all long gone, and the rooms are dilapidated and in disarray, now deteriorated and vandalized throughout with broken glass and graffiti.

The ammo bunker at the rear of the barracks is still present but void of concertina wire, and the rear garages and buildings are in various states of deterioration. We proceeded up Bering Hill to the



The back lot of the Marine barracks where Tundra Tavern once stood in Adak. (Photo by Dr. Barry Erdman)

recreation center and galley/chow hall, which were also all abandoned and in various states of deterioration as well.

The various weapons bunkers in the Adak countryside remain in fairly good condition and we explored several of those as well as the various cabins and Quonset huts where we spent weekends when off-duty. Many are quite deteriorated and hazardous to venture into today.

We explored the Marine Weapons Compound that day and most of the next

day. The building once had so much security and mystery that I could not believe we were actually in every nook and cranny without any restrictions. It was unheard of back in the day to even be near there if one was not with the Marine Guard or a Navy Weapons Specialist assigned to it. The mystery behind it now exposed and abandoned for all to see and walk into unrestricted.

As I entered the compound, the faces and names started coming back to me. I

was one of the Marine flankers on patrol who once walked this facility in all weather conditions with a machine gun and 200 rounds with deadly force authorized, 41 plus years ago. I could not believe that back in the day, I was sleeping each night, about 150-200 feet away from about 70 nuclear warheads.

We explored the entire compound, actually walking into the bunkers that once housed the nuclear weapons, as well into the weapons maintenance building, both floors of the guard tower, and the entire Marine Compound Barracks. I even found the rack I once slept in. I paused for a while to take that in. I retraced my patrol course around the entire compound. The sensors on the fence and ground are long gone, along with the multiple layers of concertina wire and razor tape that were once present.

We ventured out over the next days exploring other Marine Guard facilities. All were accessible, but abandoned, and in various states of deterioration, often stripped of valuable metals as well. The “elephant” or “dinosaur” cage (antenna array) is long gone, though their pylons/pedestals remain, which were part of the NSGA complex.

The center of where the “dinosaur” cage once stood, incidentally, was the crossroads of the two major runways of the WW II Mitchell Field where B-17, B-24 Liberator, B-25 and P-38s once took off to targets at Japanese held islands in WW II. You can only see the outlines of these airstrips by satellite as the Marsden Mats, once the runway floor, have long been removed and salvaged, the landscape taken over by mother nature and time.

Fred and I then explored places that we Marines frequented when we had time off. We visited Horseshoe Bay, and I did the arduous hike up and down with rope assistance, which was spectacular. I also visited the abandoned LORAN [long range navigation] station near there.

As we drove the island, we visited various checkpoints that the sergeant of the guard would see daily. The most famous is Checkpoint Two or “Charlie Papa Two,” which was a tall hill on the mid-portion to the north of the east/west runway. It had many antennae and small buildings on it, but has since been bulldozed flat, and is now just a hill with a slanted rocky down fall. Marines once rappelled down the face of those rocks.

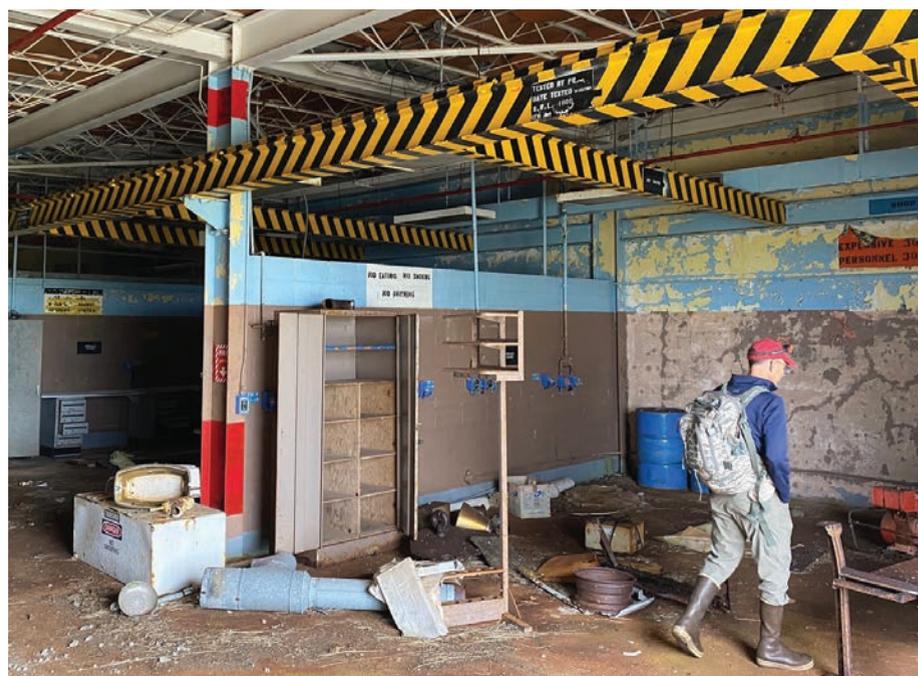
We visited Finger Bay to see the old WW II foundations and the anti-submarine nets that were placed underwater at the entrance to this bay to prevent Japanese mini-subs from entering. The metal mesh net is actually in pretty good condition.

What I also learned about present-day



DR. BARRY ERDMAN

Above: Now retired, Dr. Erdman stands in front of a weapons storage blast bunker at the Modified Advanced Airborne Underwater Weapons Complex/Compound. Erdman had guarded the M57 nuclear warheads that were stored there when he was stationed on the island.



DR. BARRY ERDMAN

Inside the Weapons Maintenance building within the Modified Advanced Airborne Underwater Weapons Complex/Compound in August 2021.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Foreground: A view of base housing and hangars with three parked P-3C Orion aircraft. Great Sitkin Island, a semi-active volcano, is visible in the background.

Adak, in an ever-changing world, is that the military may be back on Adak in some shape or form, sooner than later. As the political climate changes, this presents recurring military opportunities, given its strategic location. As well, with the melting polar ice caps, the sea has risen. Thus, shipping has increased in the region, and Adak serves as a port of opportunity. If the U.S. Navy is involved, the Marines may very well return to Adak in defense and support of that in the future.

While exploring Adak on this trip, one great story had led to another. This trip indeed went from a journey to an expedition that evolved into a personal odyssey that I will never forget. It was somewhat cathartic as well for me. I have done much to give back to the Marine Corps through the years, thankful for what the Marine experience did for me

as a person, that shaped my future.

Thus, being at the place where the foundation of it all for me was started, on Adak, I felt returning here, I could in a way, show that it was all worth it.

When I look back at my life, I am so appreciative. I am proud and feel very lucky as the American dream worked out for me. The Marines were a good part of that, and I have so much to be grateful for.

Flying out of Adak, as we rolled down the runway on take-off, I felt teary-

eyed, but good inside. I felt a sense of reconciliation and was ready to move on to my next chapter in life. This trip was so worth it, beyond words.

Author's bio: Dr. Barry E. Erdman is a retired foot and ankle surgeon who enlisted in 1979 and served in the Marine Corps until 1982. He is a freelance writer and explorer and supports the Marine Corps from time to time whenever called upon. 🇺🇸

Dr. Barry Erdman, left, with his childhood friend Fred Ripp, Alaska Airlines 737 pilot, at Anchorage Airport upon returning from Adak, August 2021. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Barry Erdman)



While exploring Adak on this trip, one great story had led to another. This trip indeed went from a journey to an expedition that evolved into a personal odyssey that I will never forget.



SRA CHEYENNE LARKIN, USAF

Are you a TRICARE beneficiary who typically uses Walmart or Sam's Club pharmacy to fill prescriptions? As of Dec. 15, 2021, they are no longer in network, but CVS is once again a TRICARE network pharmacy.

Changes Now in Effect for TRICARE Retail Network Pharmacies

As of Dec. 15, 2021, CVS Pharmacy has rejoined the TRICARE network, while Walmart, Sam's Club and some community pharmacies have left the network.

Express Scripts, the TRICARE pharmacy contractor, manages the TRICARE retail pharmacy network under a contract with the Department of Defense. Recently, they reached a new agreement that adds CVS to the network of pharmacies.

"Beneficiaries will continue to have many convenient and nearby in-network options," said U.S. Public Health Service Commander Teisha Robertson, a pharmacist with the Defense Health Agency's Pharmacy Operations Division. "Express Scripts' partnership with CVS Pharmacy ensures most beneficiaries have a network pharmacy located near their home or work."

CVS has nearly 10,000 pharmacy locations, including inside many Target stores. The change means that nearly 90 percent of beneficiaries will have access to a network pharmacy within 5 miles of their home.

If you're a TRICARE beneficiary, keep in mind that using home delivery or a military pharmacy are still lower-cost options for you, because copayments are still required when using home delivery or any retail network pharmacy.

Going forward, if you fill a prescription at Walmart or Sam's Club, it will be considered a non-network pharmacy. This means you'll have to pay the full cost of your prescription up front and will need to file a claim for partial reimbursement.

If you need to find a new network pharmacy, you can search for one on the Express Scripts website at www.express-scripts.com.

TRICARE

DOD's Move.mil Website Relocates To Military OneSource

The Department of Defense recently launched a new landing page on MilitaryOneSource.mil designed to serve as a replacement for its previous information hub, Move.mil. The new page, PCS & Military Moves, features all the resources and assistance a moving customer might need for their entire relocation experience, saving time and making it easier to access information from one centralized location.

Move.mil closed on Nov. 1, 2021. Now,

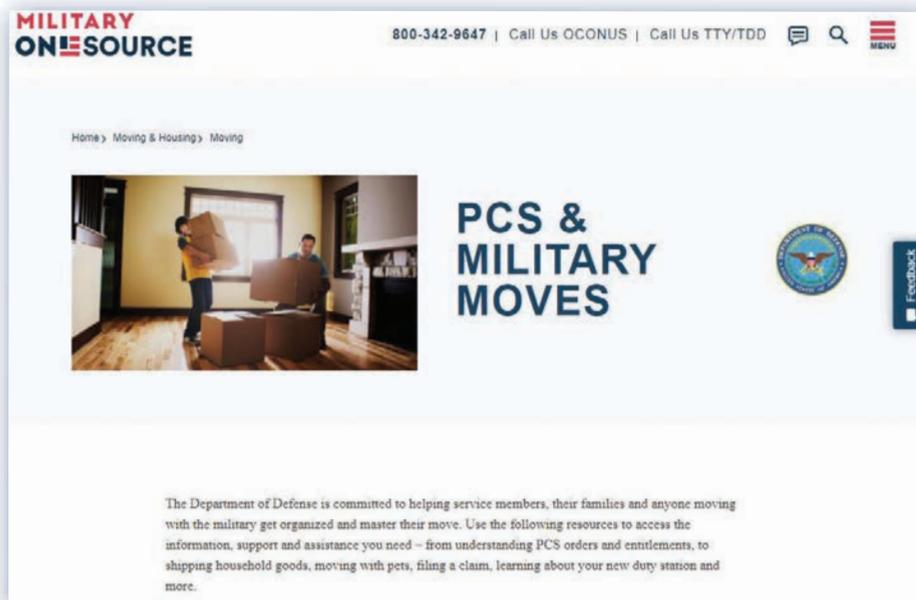
visitors are directed to MilitaryOneSource.mil, which will be updated as needed by U.S. Transportation Command.

Customers can access the PCS & Military Moves landing page under the Moving & Housing section on the MilitaryOneSource website. Once there, they can schedule a move and find resources related to shipping their personal property, as well as other aspects of their move.

The new site includes resources to help manage personal property shipments, transportation office and customer service contacts, and guides and articles explaining each step of the moving process. In addition, assistance in preparing to move and settling into a new community including financial counseling services and connections with a variety of family and school support services is provided.

For nearly a year, U.S. Transportation Command's Defense Personal Property Management Office collaborated with the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy to transition personal property information to MilitaryOneSource.mil. The resulting web pages now provide a single access point for servicemembers and their families to plan the full spectrum of their move.

"The primary factor driving this transition was improved customer service by providing servicemembers and their families with a single, integrated location to access information, resources and assistance during their moving experience," said Air Force Colonel Joel Safranek,



COURTESY OF TRANSCOM

director of the Defense Personal Property Management Office for U.S. Transportation Command.

MilitaryOneSource.mil provides comprehensive information, resources and assistance on every aspect of military life. The updated web pages are designed for servicemembers, DOD civilian employees and their families who will be impacted by a move.

“DOD’s Military OneSource program provides 24/7 support to military members and their families,” said Erika Slaton, associate director, Military Community Support Programs. “The Military OneSource website already provides significant relocation information, tools and resources. This made it the perfect place to create a centralized location for our military community.”

U.S. Transportation Command

Resilience Training for Military Families Now Offered Virtually

FOCUS family resilience training designed for active-duty servicemembers and their family or partner is now available virtually through the TeleFOCUS program, allowing families and couples to meet with a FOCUS Provider via video teleconference. The 6- to 10-week training provides free, fun and interactive sessions with a FOCUS counselor to work on areas



COURTESY OF ANGELA MELCHER

The Melcher family (above) is among those Marine families who have already utilized the new TeleFOCUS family resilience training program, a virtual version of the free service that is offered on military installations worldwide.

like emotional regulation, family closeness, routines, goal setting, transitions, communication, problem solving and navigating deployments.

“After the initial intake, we schedule weekly meetings for seven weeks, meeting on the computer each time,” said Angela Melcher, spouse of Master Sergeant Justin Melcher, USMC, whose family recently completed the program.

“The program started by working with myself and my husband, discussing how we communicated with each other and ways we could better communicate with our 11-year-old.”

The FOCUS program is available in person at locations throughout the continental U.S., Hawaii, Japan and Germany. The advantage of the virtual training is that it is flexible and available after working hours and on weekends. Each family is assessed during the initial session, and the assigned counselor can determine which program works best for the family’s needs.

“The program gave my family an opportunity to sit down and evaluate things that we would not normally discuss in everyday life conversations and provided us with tools to help navigate the more difficult situations,” said Melcher. “As a military family, our lives changes, sometimes without much notice, and we have to be flexible, which can sometimes take a toll on our mental health. With programs like FOCUS we are supporting a stable and happy home so our servicemembers can focus on their duties.”

For more information about the TeleFOCUS program, visit <https://focusproject.org/telefocus>.

LCpl Jareka Curtis, USMC



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Cpl Duane E. Dewey

Duane E. Dewey, who was awarded the Medal of Honor after buffering a grenade blast with his own body to save the life of a corpsman during the Korean War, died in St. Augustine, Fla., at the age of 89.

Dewey was a corporal leading a machine gun platoon of Company E, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division (Reinforced) on Outpost (OP) 3 during a fierce firefight against a numerically superior enemy force. He was receiving medical treatment when an enemy grenade landed nearby. Without hesitation, Cpl Dewey pushed the corpsman out of the way and pulled the grenade under his body.

On the night of April 16, 1952, at OP 3, an outpost near Panmunjom, Korea, a firefight began with incoming enemy grenades thrown from very close range. "Then all hell broke loose," said Dewey in a 2011 interview for the book "Medal of Honor," adding that he rallied his machine-gun crew to action.

The Marines were surrounded, and they

tightened up their perimeter to close up any holes in the line. Cpl Dewey's Marines were low on ammunition, so he went looking for more rounds, only to find that all the machine gun crews were in the same predicament. As Dewey returned to his position, an enemy grenade exploded behind his left foot, peppering the left side of his body with shrapnel.

While he was being examined by a corpsman, another grenade landed next to Dewey. "I grabbed it and I'm going to throw it ... but I'm laying flat on my back and I'm thinking, I can't get this out of reach of my own men," he recalled in 2011. "So I scooped it under me, under my right hip and I grabbed [the corpsman] ... and I said 'Hit the dirt, Doc, I got it in my hip pocket.' It went off and took us both off the ground. Then my next words were: 'Get me the hell out of here, I can't take much more of this.'"

Dewey, certain that he was near death, was immediately removed to a triage area with other wounded men. "I said a prayer—not for myself, I prayed for my

wife and daughter," he said.

Dewey was evacuated to the U.S. Naval Hospital in Yokosuka, Japan, then to Navy hospitals at Mare Island, Calif., and Great Lakes, Ill., where he spent months recovering.

A year after he was wounded, Cpl Dewey went to the White House for a Medal of Honor ceremony. "You must have a body of steel," President Eisenhower said to the Marine after the award citation was read. It was the retired Army general's first award of the nation's highest award for valor after he was inaugurated.

According to "Firefight at Outpost 3," published in the May 2017 issue of *Leatherneck*, when Dewey was asked why he had risked his life in such a manner, his response was that he thought "maybe it wouldn't hurt so bad."

Dewey, born in Grand Rapids, Mich., worked on a farm and as a foundry worker before he enlisted at the age of 19 on March 7, 1951. He went to boot camp at MCRD Parris Island, S.C., and completed additional combat training at Marine



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Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., before being sent to Korea. After he was discharged from the Marine Corps, he returned to civilian life in Michigan, eventually retiring and spending half the year in Florida. He was a regular attendee of "Easy" Co, 2/5 reunions.

Nancy S. Lichtman

Col Billy D. Boulding, 91, of Twenty-nine Palms, Calif. During his 33 years as a Marine aviator, he served in the Korean War and the Vietnam War. He was dual qualified as a fixed-wing and rotor-wing pilot. He was a graduate of the Navy's test pilot school and flew test flights in helicopters as well as in numerous fighter and attack aircraft. He also was an instructor at the school. His awards include the Distinguished Flying Cross and 22 Air Medals. He was a member of the Society of Experimental Test Pilots, and after his retirement from active duty, he continued his career in commercial aviation as a pilot and an administrator.

Thomas W. Curran, 78, of Nyack, N.Y. He enlisted after his college graduation and was a field radio operator in Vietnam. He served with 3rd Force Recon, 3rd Reconnaissance Bn, 3rd Marine Division at the "Rockpile."

William E. "Bud" Davis, 92, of

Albuquerque, N.M. He was commissioned and served in Korea and Japan from 1952-1954. He later had a career as an educator and track coach.

Isaac D. "Don" Everly, 84, of Nashville, Tenn. He was the older of the two Everly Brothers, the singing duo famous for chart-topping songs like "Wake Up Little Susie" and "Cathy's Clown." Along with his brother, he enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve in 1961 and went through boot camp at MCRD San Diego. While on leave in 1962, the Everly Brothers performed on "The Ed Sullivan Show," wearing their dress blues.

Capt Ralph C. Franklin, 101, of Sarasota, Fla. He was a Marine who served in the Pacific in WW II. He saw action on Bougainville and Guam.

SSgt James Hammond, 56, of Moline, Ill. He served for 20 years. After retirement, he pursued his hobbies of boating, shooting sports and model building.

Charles P. "Chuck" Handel, 77, of Middletown, Ohio. After completing his doctor of optometry degree in 1968, he served as a Navy medical officer at MCAS El Toro, Calif.

Sgt Christopher J. Harmon, 51, of Portland, Ore. He completed two tours in Iraq and later had a career as a long-haul truck driver.

MGySgt Roy G. Henry, 91, of Wilmington, N.C. He was a member of the MCL.

Cpl Wayne B. Herring, 73, of Pittsburg, Texas. He served with H/2/4, 3rdMarDiv. He was wounded during his tour in Vietnam. His awards include the Purple Heart. He later had a career as a probation officer.

Andrew "Chico" Jeffers Jr., 68, of Paducah, Ky. He enlisted and served a tour in Vietnam. He later was an iron worker. He was a member of the MCL and the Iron Workers Local. He was also an active Toys for Tots volunteer.

Cpl Robert R. Keith, 82, of Needham, Mass. He served as a crew chief in HMM-262 during his tour in Vietnam and participated in Operation Shufly. His awards include three Air Medals. He later owned and operated a pub.

John Knox Jr., 95, of Albuquerque, N.M. He enlisted in the Marine Corps at the age of 17 and served during WW II. After the war, he joined the Air Force, retiring after 22 total years of service.

PFC Kenneth E. Martin, 100, of Seattle, Wash. He enlisted in 1942 and served with the 3rdMarDiv on Guadalcanal and with the 6thMarDiv during the fighting on Sugar Loaf Hill during the Battle of Okinawa. After the war, he returned



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NANCY S. LICHTMAN

WORLD WAR II CASUALTY IS LAID TO REST—Body Bearers with Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., remove the casket of repatriated Marine PFC Harold Hayden from the caisson during his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Va., Oct. 27, 2021. In November 1943, Hayden was assigned to Company A, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, which landed against stiff Japanese resistance on the island of Betio in the Tarawa Atoll of the Gilbert Islands. Hayden died on the third day of battle, Nov. 22, 1943.

After the battle, it was reported that PFC Hayden was buried in Row D of the East Division Cemetery, later renamed Cemetery 33. In 1946, The 604th Quartermaster Graves Registration Company centralized the remains found on Tarawa at the Lone Palm Cemetery for later repatriation. Almost half of the known casualties were never found. No recovered remains could be associated with Hayden, and in October 1949, a Board of Review declared him “non-recoverable.”

In 2009, History Flight, a nonprofit search and recovery organization, discovered a burial site on Betio that was believed to be Cemetery 33, which has been the site of numerous excavations ever since then. In March 2019, excavations revealed a previously undiscovered burial site that has since been identified as Row D. The remains recovered at this site were transferred to the DPAA laboratory at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii.

To identify Hayden’s remains, scientists from DPAA used dental and anthropological analysis, as well as circumstantial and material evidence.

In 2020, Battle of Tarawa veteran Wendell Perkins spoke to *Leatherneck* about his friend PFC Hayden and the importance of the mission to recover those lost in battle. Perkins served with Hayden and was with him on Betio during his last moments. To read their story, see “Until They All Come Home: History Flight is Dedicated to Locating, Excavating Remains of Missing Marines” in the November 2020 issue of *Leatherneck*.

to Connecticut with his wife, whom he met and married when the Division was in New Zealand. He worked 37 years for General Electric. His awards include the Purple Heart.

To read about the final reunion of Martin’s fellow members of the 6thMarDiv Association, see page 36.

Cpl Richard L. Pershey, 98, of Joliet, Ill. He was assigned to 2ndMarDiv during

WW II. He was a forward observer and communications specialist, working with Navajo Code Talkers. He saw action on Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa.

John R. Roesch Sr., 91, of Oshkosh, Wis. He served in action during the Korean War.

He later earned a degree in engineering.

Sgt Walter L. Wilson, 91, of Asheville, N.C. During the Korean War he was as-

signed to 2nd Bn, 5th Marines, 1stMarDiv. His awards include the Bronze Star.

Sgt Joseph L. Williams Jr., 84, of Seminole, Fla. He enlisted after his 1954 graduation from high school. After completing recruit training at MCRD Parris Island, he was trained as an electronics and radio technician. He later had a career in the aerospace industry. 🇺🇸

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The Corps Was My Life

Now that I am approaching 87 years of age, I have been asking myself did I really experience all those wonderful events in my life as a United States Marine? Did I really ask God to spare me one night during Tet in Vietnam in January 1968? The earth had turned blood red from rocket attacks all around us. I think of all the wonderful Marine buddies I have had over the years. Some paid the ultimate sacrifice. I ask myself, "Why him, Lord and not me?"

While being assigned to recruiting duty in Pittsburgh, Pa., did I really have dinner with President Eisenhower at his request? Did I really interview Billy Eckstein's son, Billy Jr., before he joined the Marine Corps? Billy Eckstein was a famous vocalist in the 1950s and 1960s. Billy's father and mother signed the papers for him to join after he graduated high school. Was I one of the four Marines in the color guard that took part in the opening ceremony for the Pittsburgh Steelers home football games in 1957 and 1968? I even had the pleasure of meeting John Glenn while assigned to Headquarters, U.S.

Marine Corps, Washington, D.C.

My son came to me when he was getting ready to graduate from high school and asked, "Dad, do you want me to join the Marine Corps when I graduate high school?" My answer was, "Son, you get your education first then plan your life from then on." He just retired as the chief finance officer for all the commissaries as a government employee.

I retired from the Marine Corps in February 1975. The Marine Corps was good to me, and I loved it but retired when my daughter had to have open heart surgery.

The Corps was my life and still is today. *Leatherneck* magazine is a wonderful magazine to read, for it is very informative. It brings me up to date on today's Marine Corps.

MSgt Lauren P. Bands Sr., USMC (Ret)
Virginia Beach, Va.

My Time at Cua Viet River

I read with interest the letter [November issue] from SSgt Willard "Bill" Woolridge who wrote about his harrowing time at the mouth of the Cua Viet River in 1969. My own time in Vietnam was a year earlier than Bill's, and at that time, the Marines of 1st Amtrac Battalion served mostly as grunts. In fact, their unofficial name was

"Amgrunts." Those fine young Marines did such a fantastic job of patrolling and keeping the area free of the enemy that the Marine base located there was in fact, an in-country R&R center. My tank passed through the area several times, and we enjoyed jumping into the surf and having the saltwater help heal the jungle sores that were infesting our bodies.

With regards to 122 rockets hitting the base, I am quite sure that the number that Bill quotes is most likely the size of the rocket (122 mm) and not the quantity. While Cua Viet was near the DMZ it is highly unlikely that the NVA carried that quantity of rockets south to fire on the in-country R&R center.

Sgt John Wear
USMC, 1966-1969
Elbert, Colo.

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?



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Reunions

• **East Coast Drill Instructors Assn.**, April 7-10, Parris Island, S.C. Contact SgtMaj K.D. Miller, (828) 499-0224, usmcpidi@charter.net, www.parrislanddi.org.

• **National Montford Point Marine Assn.**, July 12-16, Shreveport, La. Contact Ronald Johnson, (504) 202-8552, vice_president@montfordpointmarines.org.

• **Marine Corps Aviation Association Don Davis Squadron (Aviation Logistics Marines)**, March 10-13, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Kevin McCutcheon, kevinmccutcheon76@gmail.com, or Gale Rodgers, roddgers770ki@yahoo.com.

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

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

• **2nd Force Recon Co**, May 12-14, Bishopville, S.C. Contact Phil Smith, (540) 498-0733, jarhed73@yahoo.com.

• **I/3/7 (all eras)**, April 27-30, Myrtle Beach, S.C. Contact Dennis Deibert, 6007 Catherine St., Harrisburg, PA 17112, (717) 652-1695, dennisdeibert8901@comcast.net.

• **M/3/7 (RVN)**, May 11-14, Annapolis, Md. Contact George Martin, (443) 822-3597, m37bulldog@aol.com.

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

• **MCSFO Puerto Rico, Marine Guard Unit Puerto Rico, Marine Barracks Puerto Rico (all eras)**, May 8-12, Rio Mar, Puerto Rico. Contact Matt Schavel, (949) 212-7851, seaswirl170@gmail.com, or Grady Johnston, (404) 432-8223, 2009gj@gmail.com.

• **TBS 3-64**, April 5-7, Quantico, Va. Contact Hugh Doss, hudoss@aol.com.

• **TBS 4-67, 5-67** "Rally at the Alamo," April 19-22, San Antonio. Contact Ken Pouch, (860) 881-6819, kpouch5@gmail.com.

• **TBS, Co C, 3-72**, April 20-23, Quantico, Va. Contact Col Joe Mueller, USMCR (Ret), (818) 815-8331, jnm21213@yahoo.com.

• **TBS, Co D, 4-73**, is planning a 50th-anniversary reunion in 2023, Quantico, Va. Contact Col Bill Anderson, USMCR (Ret), (540) 850-4213, binche57@yahoo.com, or Col Bob Donaghue, USMCR (Ret), (617) 840-0267, ip350haven@comcast.net.

• **VMFA-451**, March 8-12, Beaufort, S.C. Contact Sgt Mark Lyons, reunionvmfa451@yahoo.com.

Wanted

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

• Virginia Andrews, 221 Springdale St., Cumberland, MD 21502, (301) 697-0074, wisewomanandrews@hotmail.com, wants a **platoon photo and recruit graduation book for Plt 319, Parris Island, 1973.**

• GySgt Bruce Rebenstorf, USMCR (Ret), 6016 Stanton Ave., Highland, CA 92346, brucerebenstorf@gmail.com, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 1043, San Diego, 1972**, or photocopies of its pages.

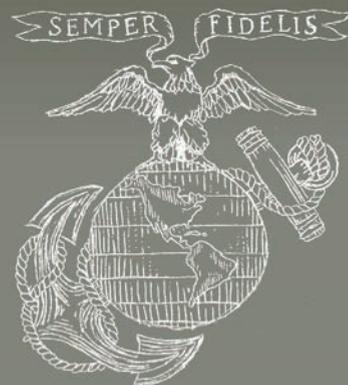
• John Survilla, 65 Williams St., Edwardsville, PA 18704, wants a **recruit graduation book for Plt 175, Parris Island, 1964.**

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

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Saved Round

By Jonathan Bernstein



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

MARINES BRING THE FIREPOWER—The Shoulder-Launched Multipurpose Assault Weapon (SMAW) was a solely Marine Corps-developed weapon system that first entered service in the mid-1980s. The system consisted of a reloadable main launcher with an optical sight and an attached 9 mm spotting rifle. The launcher was loaded from the rear with a self-contained rocket tube that after being inserted into the launch tube, made contact with the firing circuit via two electrical connections and enabled firing. It was intended to be used against fortifications, bunkers, light armored vehicles and other obstacles that required more firepower than a standard Marine rifle squad had available previously.

The weapon had three types of rockets available: Mk3 Mod 0 High Explosive Dual Purpose, Mk6 Mod 0 High Explosive Anti Armor, and Mk80 Novel Explosive (thermobaric) rocket.

The Mk153 SMAW saw its combat debut in Operation Desert Storm and continued in service through the Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns. The National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., recently acquired two launchers with expended rocket tubes.

The first was issued to 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines in September 2008 and was with the battalion when it deployed to Iraq in April 2009, the battalion's third Iraq deployment. It remained in the battalion's armory until January 2013. During its 2009 deployment, the 3rd Bn was the main element for Task Force Military Police, providing security for Anbar Province. The battalion also engaged Al Qaeda in Iraq in the northern portions of the province as well.

The second was issued to 3rd Battalion, 24th Marines, in

June 2006 and possibly deployed with a portion of the battalion to Fallujah. The battalion deployed to Iraq in 2009 and relieved 3rd Bn, 3rd Marines in Anbar Province, assuming the counterinsurgency role the previous battalion had established. Third Bn, 24th Marines was the last Marine combat unit to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The SMAW continues to serve in Marine infantry battalions with upgrades to SMAW Mk153 Mod 2 becoming standard in 2020.

The addition of these two weapons to the Arms and Armor Collection at the NMMC better enables the museum to show the evolution of Marine shoulder launched rockets from World War II to the present. In addition, with its use in Iraq, it gives the museum a better ability to interpret Operation Iraqi Freedom.

If *Leatherneck* readers have information on 3/3 or 3/24 using SMAWs on their deployments, the museum would love to hear from you. You can email me at: jonathan.bernstein@usmcu.edu.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE MARINE CORPS

Author's bio: Jonathan Bernstein is the Arms and Armor Curator for the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Previously he was the Director/Curator of the Air Defense Artillery Museum. Bernstein began his museum career in 1991 at the USS Intrepid Sea Air & Space Museum and has served in a number of museum roles since then. He was an Army Aviation officer, flying AH-64A and D Apache attack helicopters with the 1-104th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion, Pennsylvania National Guard from 2006-2012. He has also published a number of books and articles on military and aviation history.



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