

MARCH 2023

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LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

**Happy 03
Month!**

**A Salute to
Infantry Marines**

**Machine Gunners
Take to Social Media
To Preach the
Belt-Fed Gospel**

**Task Force Tarawa
Engaged Enemy
In the Streets
Of An Nasiriyah**





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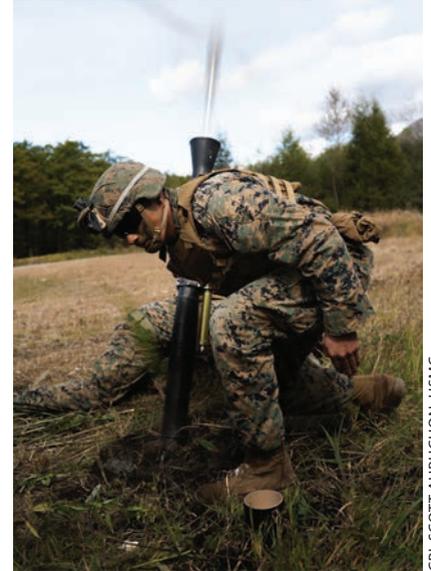
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From the Editor's Desk



LCPL WILLIAM CHOCKEY, USMC



CPL SCOTT AUBUCHON, USMC

From the day we step on the yellow footprints at the recruit depots or report to Officer Candidates School, Marines are constantly reminded of the dominance of the infantry in our Corps. Not in terms of “only the best Marines are grunts,” but rather that all other Marines support the infantry. From pilots to administrators, logisticians to combat engineers, tankers to ammo techs, all understand that while “every Marine is a rifleman,” those who specifically serve in the infantry occupational field have been the backbone of our Corps for hundreds of years. Not that it makes other Marines “lesser” in any way, but rather it speaks to our organization, our ethos and our doctrine. One team, one fight with the grunts as our own center of gravity.

So, when the concept of “03 Month” gained popularity in recent years with the month of March being informally celebrated on social media and through the active duty ranks of young Marines, it should have come as no surprise. And grunts being grunts, each military occupational specialty (MOS) within the infantry occupational field began claiming a specific day as their own. Basic riflemen, the 0311s, celebrate on March 11. Machine gunners destroy their bodies with one of the hardest workouts of the year on March 31—0331 Day.

And for those infantry MOSs whose specialties don't correspond to a particular day, including mortarmen (0341), assault men (0351), and of course, infantry unit leaders (0369), they celebrate the entire month of March, using “03 Month” as an opportunity to connect with their fellow grunts online, in bars or anywhere Marines gather.

In honor of “03 Month” and our brothers and sisters



USMC

in combat arms, the March issue of *Leatherneck* features several articles focusing on infantry Marines, including “Goons Up,” the story of a veteran Marine informally creating the “Spirit of Basilone” award for fellow leathernecks, and an excerpt from the book “The Rifle,” which tells the tale of a young Marine machine-gunner during the Battle of Okinawa. There's also “Nasiriyah Remembered: The First Battle of the Iraq War 20 Years Later,” which recounts the fighting that took place in the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

So, here's to the 03s, the backbone of our Corps! Semper Fidelis, Marines!

Mary H. Reinwald
Colonel, USMC (Ret)
Editor, *Leatherneck*



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COVER: LCpl Danny Robinson, a machine gunner with Co B, 1st Bn, 7th Marines, carries an M240B medium machine gun on his back while maneuvering to a patrol base during a mission in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Aug. 16, 2014. Photo by Sgt Joseph Scanlan, USMC.

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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.)

I'm not sure if you hear enough about the articles that you put in the magazine and what effect they have on the public, but I will give you one instance where it made a difference. My name is Mike Brennan and I live in Florida. I am 83 years old! I joined the Marine Corps from a small town in Nebraska in 1959. Imagine my surprise when I read the article "Returning Arthur" by Geoffrey W. Roecker in the September 2022 issue of *Leatherneck* about Falls City, Neb. In July of 1959, I was told that I was the only person in that town of 5,120 people to join the Marines. I went to Catholic school and one of my classmates was a fellow named Don Coupe. I went to boot camp in San Diego and when I came home, Don never brought up that he had any relatives in the Marines.

Don passed away before I read your article, so I called his wife. Neither she nor Don knew about James Coupe, who is mentioned in the article. This started the search. Before the war, the Catholic cemetery was the public cemetery, and all bodies were buried there. Falls City bought a larger plot of land and sold this plot to the Catholic Church. Don's wife and one of our classmates found John's grave. He was Don's uncle and all his dad's relatives had passed away. To say I was in a state of shock is an understatement!

This year we will celebrate the Birthday of the Corps with the Marine Corps flag and the American flag over his grave. The Coupe family has taken over the duties as caretakers. Thank you for bringing this to our attention.

Mike Brennan
Clearwater, Fla.

Leatherneck Regarded as a Five-Star Read

Being a Marine veteran of the Korean War, after viewing and reading a back

issue of *Leatherneck*, I was reminiscing back to 1952.

As a 17-year-old Marine reservist activated into service I went through training at Parris Island. Upon graduation, I was given the opportunity to sign up for a subscription to *Leatherneck* magazine. Little did I realize how much I would look forward to receiving my issues every month. From the past to the present day, a total of 71 years, I truly look forward to enjoying my reading of the magazine. Giving *Leatherneck* a five-star rating in reading material!

John Messia Jr.
Brockton, Mass.

VMI: A Model Education

I wanted you folks down there at Quantico to see this letter to the editor printed in the *Washington Post* 31 years ago in April 1991. It mentioned a study conducted by a Marine Corps officer on the performance of college graduate Marine officers that ranked VMI graduates above those from most other colleges including the Naval Academy.

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Marines' Hymn

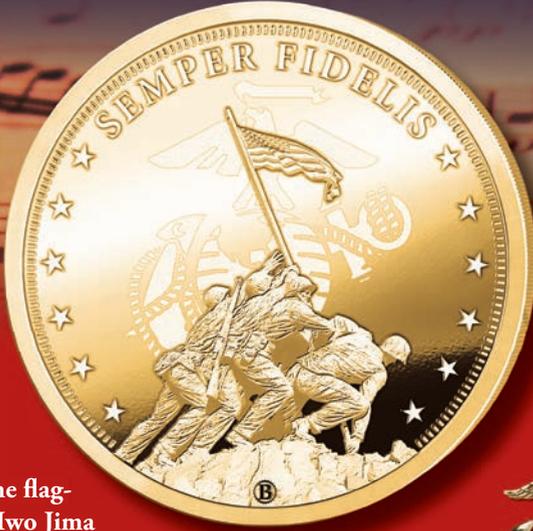
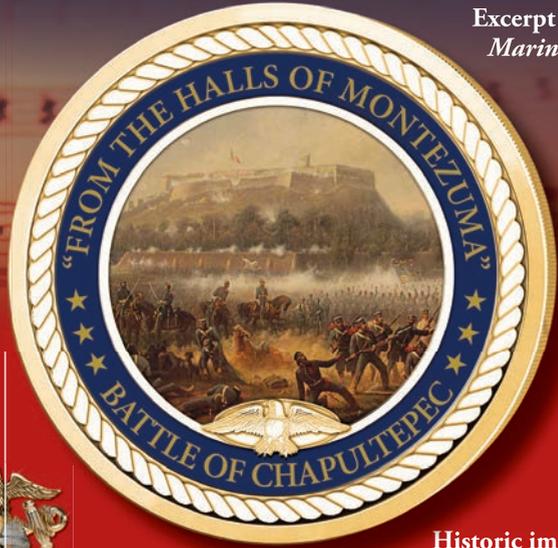


Image of the flag-raising on Iwo Jima and the USMC Eagle, Globe, and Anchor emblem



Historic imagery of USMC at Chapultepec



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Is there anybody there at Quantico with *Leatherneck*, the *Marine Corps Gazette*, or the Marine Corps Association familiar with this study?

Greg Paspatis
Alexandria, Va.

*No, we're not familiar with this study but this Penn State NROTC graduate strongly disagrees with its results. Of course, the numerous VMI generals who have helped lead our Corps in recent years probably think it's accurate.—
Editor*

Regarding the Marine Corps Tattoo Policy

Good article on tattoos in the Marines and military service. I wonder what, if any, restrictions are bestowed on the U.S. Army, Air Force, Navy, or the Coast Guard. The dress uniforms of all services expose only the face and hands of a squared away member. Having served our country, I only have one tattoo on each forearm to let everyone know I paid my dues to this great country. Two years mandatory!

I remember an R&R visit to Hong Kong in 1965 when some shipmates and I talked a "boot" into getting a tattoo of the USS *Galveston* (CLG-3) across his chest. Not to worry, we paid for it! When he woke up the next morning, we could only quiet him down by telling him he was the "saltiest sailor" onboard *Galveston*. So, Scotty from South Dakota, I'll tip one for you!

To all members of our military with or without tattoos, it is our duty to protect America!

John Sanchez
USN, 1961-1966
Hanford, Calif.

"The Illustrated Marine" article in the January 2023 issue of *Leatherneck* magazine got me reminiscing about my days in the Corps (1953-1957). While in boot camp at Parris Island, SC, my senior DI, Sgt Clarence J. Waller, had tattoos on his arms, legs and other body parts. We "boots" marveled at the sight of them. We assumed all good Marines must acquire at least one. My choice was the famous Marine bulldog wearing a WW I helmet with USMC printed beneath its jaw.

For about a year after boot camp, a couple of my buddies and I pondered the idea of getting one of those marvelous tattoos. Because of the anticipated pain of being stabbed by the tattoo artist, I was reluctant to acquire that famous bulldog image on my shoulder. To bolster my courage, I realized that I would have to get a bit tipsy. Then I learned I would

pass out before I garnered the necessary courage. Hence, I have never gotten a tattoo.

My son, who spent eight years in the Corps (1982-1991), never acquired a tattoo. He had observed a couple of very faded tattoos on an elderly uncle of ours. He wanted no part of the eventual fade job. His son (my grandson) is currently serving in the Corps. I am unaware as to whether he has obtained a gung-ho tattoo or not.

Lloyd Stimson
Fort Washington, Md.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading the recent tattoo article, "The Illustrated Marine." As the magazine of the Marines are you 'bold and audacious' enough to publish my platoon's experience?

In 1973 my amtracs were attached to Battalion Landing Team 2/4. We went afloat from Okinawa aboard an LST. One of our frequent port calls was to Hong Kong, which was known for high-quality, low-cost tattoo parlors. My Chinese eagle over USMC cost 10 dollars (from Pinky's, the best). Soon, morning formation on the fantail looked like the Sunday comic strips.

One day here was a buzz of excitement on the well deck. A lance corporal on liberty had a butterfly tattooed on his genitals! I saw that first one myself... the other five tattooed genitals on the float were verified by others (three butterflies and three *Playboy* rabbits).

I had no illustration measuring templates of the Marine Corps Bulletins for guidance. Were these tattoos non-reg?

Tony Caminiti
USMC, 1972-1976
New Hyde Park, N.Y.

Marine Phantoms

I had three run-ins with Marine F-4 Phantoms. One was on Hill 55 during morning chow. The SOB pilot decided to buzz the Hill 55 mess hall. I guess he thought it was funny, putting a couple of hundred Marines under the tables.

Another run-in was riding on the back of a deuce-and-a-half around the end of the Da Nang runway. I was standing, hanging onto the rail while clutching my rifle. I heard a bunch of sirens and saw a bunch of fire trucks and other emergency vehicles racing down the runway, away from my end. Then I heard a jet and turned to see a Marine F-4 coming in, directly over us. As he passed by, I saw a 250, hanging nose down from one of his wings. There was a moment of fear, recognizing what was happening. The F-4 was close enough over us that I could have hit him with a rock. He barely

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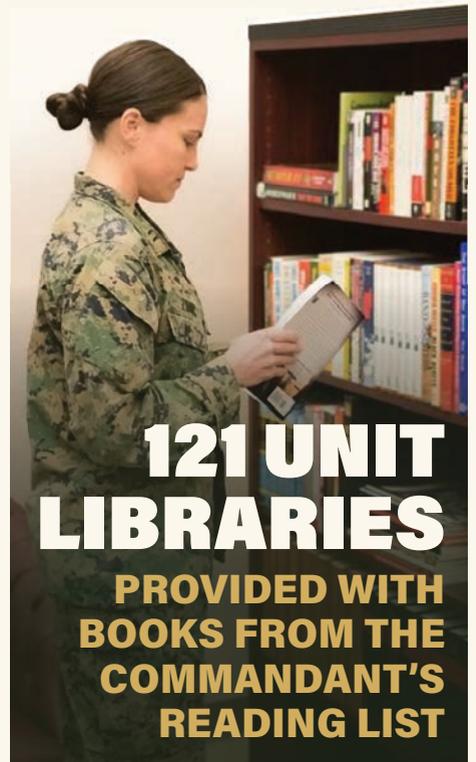
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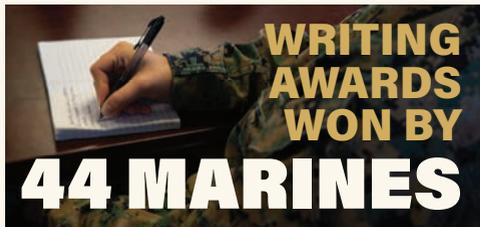
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cleared the runway fence and touched down so softly that his hydraulics barely moved. I was so close that I could see the hydraulics on his wheels. He touched down perfectly and rolled away from us. I don't think he used his brakes.

The last Phantom I saw was in May 1969. I was a tower forward observer at 1st Marines command post about 8 miles south of 327. We had gotten hit the night before and it had been a pretty big shoot out. Charlie 1/11 had taken out about two dozen NVA. The survivors had fled across the rice paddies to a village to the east and were trapped there. A battalion from 1st Marines were walking across the paddies and got pinned down for a couple of hours. I had my lunch and walked over to where a Huey was parked. I stood and watched in amazement as an F-4 came in and made four bomb runs. The F-4 dove to tree top level dropping his 250s, one at a time. He was so low that I could not see him after his runs. He was below treetop level as he flew over the paddies on the other side. During his bomb runs, I could see .50-caliber or 12.7 mm red tracers firing back at him. He was firing down, and they were firing back. The tracers floated past his wings. I didn't see him come back up after the last run but that wasn't anything unusual since I hadn't seen him on other runs. Suddenly, the Huey crew went nuts and jumped aboard. They were missing a gunner and were going without him. I volunteered to go. At first, they were reluctant, but waved me on. I got on and the chopper was starting to lift when the other gunner came running. I had to get off. I am not sure if the plane was shot down or knocked down by its own bomb. This scene led me to write this little poem:

The Air Force bombs from 20,000 feet.
The Navy bombs from 5,000.

But the Marines, they hand deliver.

Snuffy Jackson
USMC, 1968-1969
Loudonville, N.Y.

Former Naval Aviator Shares His Story

How honored I am, brave Marines, to have been a member of the most lethal immediate offensive territorial control force in the world, the United States Marine Corps. Once a Marine still a Marine, even at age 86. Sixty years ago, in 1962, I was a naval aviator, and flew the fastest aircraft in world over 1,000 miles per hour, the F-8 Crusader. My mission was to annoy Russians in Cuba, flying at high speeds but at a low enough level to activate their surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites and get them to lock on our aircraft and threaten to blow us out of sky. Our



COURTESY OF GERALD CARSON

Gerald Carson served in the Marine Corps from 1958 to 1962 before joining the Marine Corps Reserve in 1967. He was a naval aviator and flew an F-8 Crusader.

electronic countermeasure aircraft would advise me, "No. 2, they are locked and tracking you." We Marines know there is no fright, no "I have got to get out of here." Our only thought: complete mission!

During that time, Kennedy called the Kremlin and instructed Chairman Khrushchev to eliminate this reckless, provocative threat to world peace. We who are older than 70 years remember, the world was on edge with resolute Kennedy and blustering Khrushchev facing off, neither showing any sign of negotiating hard lines. The United States was living with the possibility of a nuclear war. Khrushchev came to sense that millions would also die in Russia. He realized he was negotiating with an unblinking President. He agreed to remove SAM sites from Cuba. Thus

ended the Cuban Missile Crisis.

So, how did it come about that a farm boy from northern Minnesota, with his brother, mom and dad caring for pigs, cows, chickens and horses, became a participant in the most serious threat to world survival? My dad was a Marine, a private during World War II, serving in the South Pacific. He enlisted at age 35 and fought the Japanese; duty and honor calling him. Years later, while I was attending at University of Minnesota, I became aware of Marine Corps Platoon Leaders Course. As a graduate I would be made an officer in U.S. Marine Corps!

My mother gasped in horror, my dad beamed. I wanted to serve in the roughest assignment the Marine Corps offered, "03-Okie," in the infantry on Okinawa, trained to locate and destroy the enemy by fire and close combat. However, one

day when I was standing in formation, we were asked, “Any of you guys interested in an orientation flight tomorrow with the prospect of flight school to become a naval aviator?” I raised my hand and later got accepted for flight school and finished high up enough in the class where I could choose a type of aircraft. I flew with Marine Fighter Squadrons 122, 235, and 333 and operated off three aircraft carriers: USS *Independence* (CVA-62), USS *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (CVB-42), and USS *Shangri-La* (CV-38).

Marines don’t cry, with exceptions. I cried upon the death of my dear wife of 55 years, September 9, 2022. Carol always insisted that I place a Marine Corps decal on back of every one of our cars. I cannot tell you how many times I heard, “Sir, I’m giving you a warning today. But slow down and take it easy.”

Gerald Carson
USMCR, 1967-1970
Las Cruces, N.M.

Marine Officer Out of Uniform In Marine Shop Ad

The Marine officer that The Marine Shop so proudly displays on page 55 of the January issue of *Leatherneck* is out of uniform per my recollection. He is wearing major oak leaves, signifying his
[continued on page 68]



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In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Kyle Watts

California

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Exercise Steel Knight 23

For more than 30 years, Exercise Steel Knight has served as 1st Marine Division's culminating event for predeployment certification. As the nature of threats evolve, so does the training. Steel Knight 23 put Marines to the test to meet challenges they could face in the future.

The scope of Steel Knight 23 expanded across every element of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Marines with 1stMarDiv, 1st Marine Logistics Group, and 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing trained alongside Sailors and Marines with Expeditionary Strike Group 3. The exercise brought thousands of service members together to enhance naval integration, refine joint planning, and execute Expeditionary Advance Base Operations (EABO).

Marines and Sailors conducted Steel Knight 23 in two phases: a Command Post Exercise (CPX) and a Mission Rehearsal Exercise (MRX). The CPX tested each subordinate command's

ability to collect intelligence on enemy forces, coordinate joint fire support, and simulate strikes, while sustaining the MAGTF with critical supplies across dispersed locations. Additionally, the CPX enabled all domain operations to include cyber, space, and information operations to complement kinetic actions in the operational environment. In the MRX of Steel Knight 23, Marines and Sailors worked together to maneuver combat ships and Marine aviation squadrons and move forces from the sea to the land.

"Steel Knight provides the venue to experiment with new technology, future operating concepts, and to test out our partnership with the Navy to operate as [a] naval integrated warfighting organization in a future fight," said Major General Benjamin Watson, Commanding General, 1stMarDiv.

Steel Knight 23 certified 1st Marine Regiment and Combat Logistics Battalion 1 for the upcoming annual rotation of Marines and Sailors deploying to Australia as part of Marine Rotational

Force–Darwin 2023. As part of the certification requirements, Marines and Sailors responded to simulated crises and contingency scenarios in a contested environment.

"Simulated combat operations are ongoing to execute sea denial operations so the joint force can then control and have freedom of movement and can maneuver in a combat scenario to refine operational capabilities and tactics, techniques and procedures," said Rear Admiral James Kirk, Expeditionary Strike Group 3 Commander.

Steel Knight 23 gives Marines and Sailors the chance to rehearse EABO—a key factor to Force Design 2030. EABO involves the employment of forces in isolated environments as well as Marines and Sailors operating across contested maritime areas. This concept challenges a force's ability to plan, communicate and operate on small island chains, sea lanes and aboard ships scattered across vast areas while still maintaining synchronization with each other. To rehearse the EABO concept across multiple loca-



Marines with "Bravo" Company, 1st Reconnaissance Bn, 1stMarDiv, jump from an MH-47 Chinook helicopter from 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment during hoist training as part of Exercise Steel Knight 23, off the coast of MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 2, 2022. Hoisting is a maritime insertion method for small units during amphibious operations.

CPL WILLOW MARSHALL, USMC



LCPL BRAYDEN DANIEL, USMC



Above: Cpl Anthony Schultz, a squad leader with "Lima" Co, 3rd Bn, 1st Marines, patrols during Steel Knight 23 at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 6, 2022. (Photo by LCpl Brayden Daniel, USMC)

Left: Cpl Ty Smith, a rifleman with "Lima" Co, 3rd Bn, 1st Marines, posts security during Steel Knight 23 at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 7, 2022.



CPL JOSHUA BRITTENHAM, USMC

Marines with 3rd Low Altitude Air Defense Bn, MACG-38, 3rd MAW, fire FIM-92A Stinger surface-to-air missiles during Steel Knight 23 on San Clemente Island, Calif., Dec. 5, 2022.

tions, participating units spread throughout southern and central California. Training locations included Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, San Clemente Island, and Fort Hunter Liggett, each serving as a scenario location for the purpose of the exercise. Marines coordinated logistical support and planned operations across the different locations to simulate operating across isolated areas in a future conflict.

“Steel Knight taught us how we would functionally work together in the context of a fight in the maritime littorals to gain an advantage over a very challenging adversary,” said Watson. “It’s important that we pursue every warfighting advantage. None of us have sufficient combat power to do this on our own.

“[Steel Knight 23] makes us more ready to bring the team together so we learn from each other and refine our processes, so we can exercise and utilize those capabilities quickly to outpace an enemy and achieve sea control that we’re going to need to enable the joint force in a military conflict that we can envision in the future,” said Kirk.

2ndLt Arthur Deal, USMC

Camp Pendleton, Calif. USMC Receives Final AH-1Z Viper Aircraft Delivery of Program of Record

The 189th and final AH-1Z Viper aircraft of the Marine Corps Program of Record (POR) was delivered from Bell on Nov. 4, 2022. Col Nathan “MOG” Marvel, Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 39, flew the Viper from Bell in Amarillo, Texas, to the receiving unit, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Training Squadron (HMLAT) 303, where a short reception acknowledging the historic moment ensued.

“The completion of the H-1 Program of Record delivery is a momentous event for Marine Aviation,” Marvel said. “By no means is this the end of an era—it is the next chapter in the great legacy of the H-1 and the U.S. Marine Corps.”

The AH-1Z Viper is a twin-engine attack helicopter featuring a four-blade, bearingless, composite main rotor system, and armament including the M197 Gatling gun, 70 mm rockets, and air-to-air and air-to-surface missiles, including the latest AGM-179 Joint Air-to-Ground Missile (JAGM).

“Today’s H-1s are far more lethal, survivable, and sustainable than their pre-

decessors. They bring capability and capacity to the battle space that no other platform can provide,” Marvel noted. “These aircraft build on combat proven tasks such as Offensive Air Support and Assault Support but also have demonstrated the ability to conduct sea control and sea denial operations. They are proven kill chain enablers and effecters.”

Bell completed the UH-1Y Venom POR of 160 aircraft in 2018, bringing the combined H-1 POR to 349 aircraft. The Marine Corps ordered its first lot of H-1s in 1962, and the program has evolved in the six decades following. Since the first delivery of the AH-1Z and UH-1Y to Marines, the H-1 mixed fleet has accumulated more than 450,000 flight hours through a full spectrum of military operations. Bell will continue to support the H-1s with lethality, survivability, and reliability upgrades through a long-term modernization plan that helps ensure the aircraft keep an overwhelming tactical advantage for generations. The H-1 production line is still active in support of foreign military sales to approved U.S. allies, including the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Czech Republic.

Capt Natalie Batcheler, USMC



CPL LEVI VOSS, USMC

Col Nathan “MOG” Marvel, Commanding Officer, MAG-39, 3rd MAW, and the Bell H-1 team gathered around the final AH-1Z Viper produced for the Marine Corps, MCAS Camp Pendleton, Calif., Nov. 4, 2022. Marvel flew the final Marine Corps AH-1Z Viper from Amarillo, Texas, to MCAS Camp Pendleton.

Pacific Ocean: 13th MEU Conducts Maritime Interdiction Training



SGT BRENDAN CUSTER, USMC

Marines with All Domain Reconnaissance, 13th MEU, board training vessel USNS *Atlas* as part of a maritime interdiction operation training exercise, Aug. 31, 2022. The *Makin Island* Amphibious Ready Group, includes amphibious assault ship USS *Makin Island* (LHD-8) and amphibious transport docks USS *Anchorage* (LPD-23) and USS *John P. Murtha* (LPD-26), was underway conducting integrated training operations with the 13th MEU in the U.S. 3rd Fleet to prepare for an upcoming deployment.

Korea: 3/4 Participates in KEMP 23.1



LCPL MICHAEL TAGGART, USMC



LCPL MICHAEL TAGGART, USMC

LCpl Dakota Rudd (above), a rifleman with 3rd Bn, 4th Marines, and other infantry Marines participate in a platoon attack during Korea Marine Exercise Program (KMEP) 23.1 at Rodriguez Live Fire Complex, Republic of Korea, Nov. 22, 2022. KMEP is conducted routinely to maintain the trust, proficiency, and readiness of the ROK-U.S. Alliance. Marines from 3/4 deployed in the Indo-Pacific region under 4th Marines, 3rdMarDiv as part of the Unit Deployment Program.

Japan:

1/2 Gets Range Time at Fuji Viper 23.1



LCPL JAYLEN DAVIS, USMC

Marines with 1st Bn, 2nd Marines fire an FGM-148 Javelin shoulder-fired antitank missile during Fuji Viper 23.1 at Combined Arms Training Center, Camp Fuji, Japan, Dec. 15, 2022. Exercise Fuji Viper demonstrates a commitment to realistic training that produces lethal, ready, and adaptable forces capable of decentralized operations across a wide range of missions. The Marines of 1/2 deployed in the Indo-Pacific region under 4th Marines, 3rdMarDiv as part of the Unit Deployment Program.



LCPL JAYLEN DAVIS, USMC

Above: A Marine with 1/2 fires an M240B machine gun while conducting squad attacks during Fuji Viper 23.1 on Dec. 7, 2022.

Right: Marines from 1/2 fire an M252 81 mm mortar system during Fuji Viper 23.1 on Nov. 30, 2022. 🇺🇸



LCPL JAYLEN DAVIS, USMC

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- Myelodysplastic Syndromes
- Hepatic Steatosis
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Nasiriyah Remembered:

The First Battle of the Iraq War, 20 Years Later

By GySgt Chase McGrorty-Hunter, USMC



LCPL BRYAN J. NEALY, USMC

BGen Richard F. Natonski, commander of Task Force Tarawa, speaks to a reporter in An Nasiriyah in 2003.

Friction, uncertainty, and complexity are just a few of the tenets described in MCDP-1 that underlie warfare. Each of these tenets and more were present for the Marines of Task Force Tarawa (TFT) on March 23, 2003, when they spearheaded the attack into the city of An Nasiriyah during the opening stages of the war in Iraq. This initial battle of the war would challenge the Marines on the ground who were engaged in combat.

Just over a year after the attacks of 9/11, the lance corporal underground on Marine Corps bases were abuzz with the news that Marines were heading to Iraq. Few Marines knew which units were going and even fewer knew when this was going to happen. With the holidays approaching, Camp Lejeune, like many other bases, all but ceased normal operations as Marines made their trips home to spend Christmas with their families.

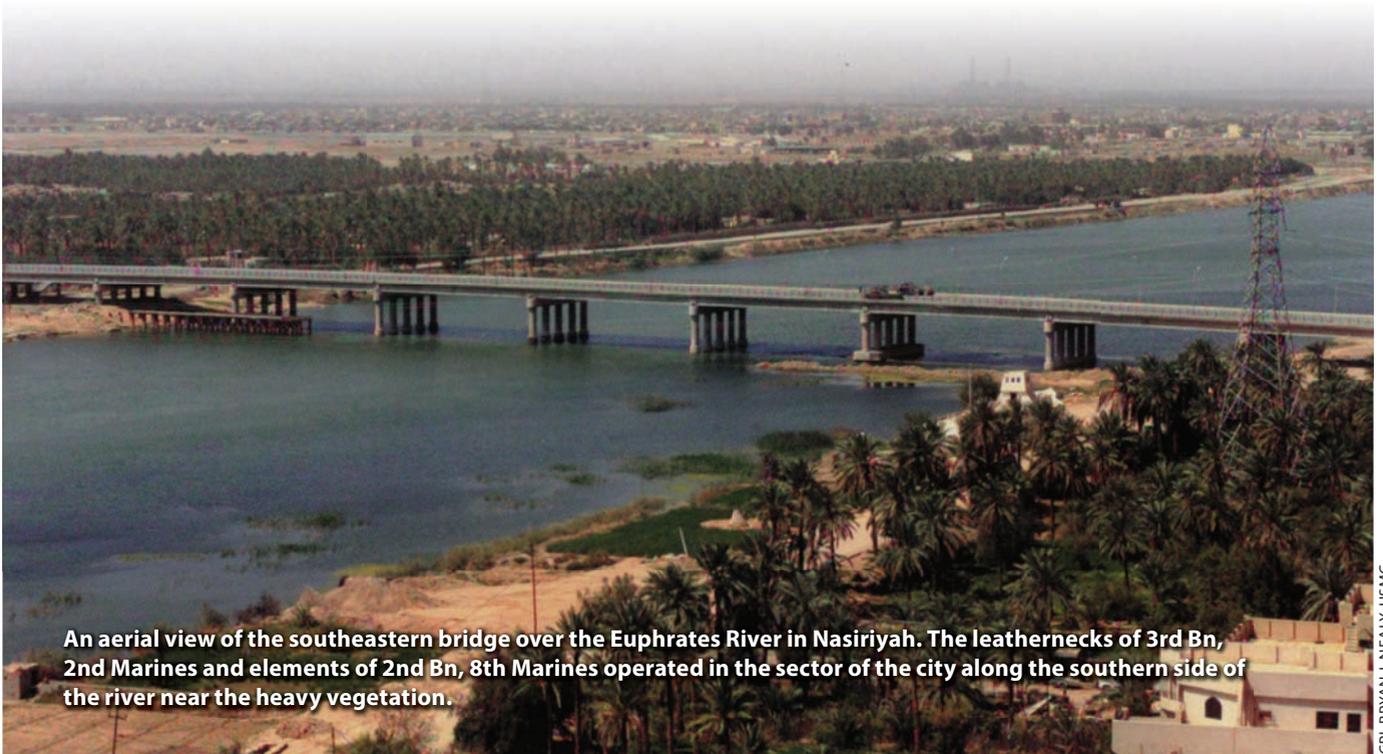
On Dec. 27, 2002, Marines across the country began receiving phone calls. “Leave has been recalled. Get back to base. We’re deploying to Iraq.” It was a jarring message, but it was one that was welcomed by many Marines who had been itching for their chance to join the still-fresh global war on terrorism.

Units on Camp Lejeune were quickly reassigned to form the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade which was designated

Task Force Tarawa (TFT) in homage to the Marines of World War II who participated in one the toughest battles in the island hopping campaign. Composed of 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines; 3rd Bn, 2nd Marines; and 2nd Bn, 8th Marines, along with an air combat element from Marine Air Group 29, TFT was built to be the bludgeoning force that would clear a path north from Kuwait to Baghdad, Iraq, in order to allow the main effort, the 1st Marine Division and 3rd Army Infantry Division, to arrive in Baghdad with their full fighting capability.

The Marines of TFT knew that they would be doing most of the fighting on Highway 1.

For many, this experience of finally going to war was still surreal and hard to comprehend. “We were there [in Iraq], but it didn’t feel like it hit us until we got to Nasiriyah,” Major Charles Benbow



An aerial view of the southeastern bridge over the Euphrates River in Nasiriyah. The leathernecks of 3rd Bn, 2nd Marines and elements of 2nd Bn, 8th Marines operated in the sector of the city along the southern side of the river near the heavy vegetation.

LCPL BRYAN J. NEALY, USMC

The city of Nasiriyah proved to be of vital importance ... It would facilitate a secondary route for American forces to ensure that they could not be completely bogged down on a single route north.

recalls of his time with TFT as a platoon commander in 2/8.

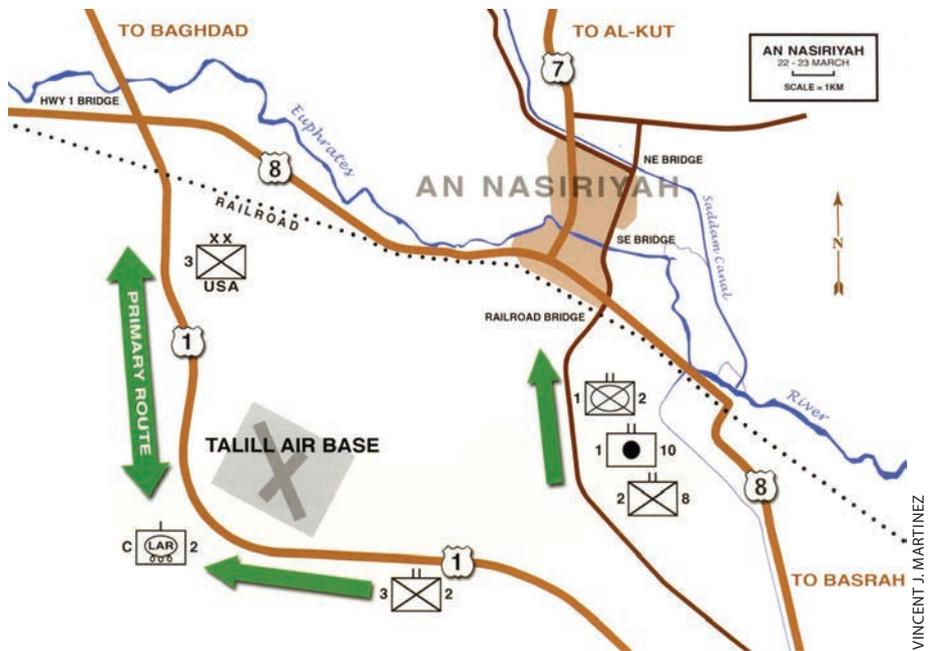
On March 19, 2003, after Saddam Hussein had failed to obey President George W. Bush's ultimatum to leave Iraq within 48 hours, a strategic strike campaign commenced against Baghdad and effectively began the war in Iraq with the subsequent crossing of the border by American and allied troops. The first few days went according to plan with TFT executing an off-road convoy to lead the surge north.

In the midnight hours of March 22, Brigadier General Richard Natonski, commander of TFT, received word that their "be prepared to" mission to seize the city of An Nasiriyah was now activated with the goal of obtaining control of the bridges by 10 the next morning to allow the passage of troops from the 1stMarDiv.

The city of Nasiriyah proved to be of vital importance as it was the beginning of Highway 7, a route that paralleled Highway 1 heading north to Baghdad. It would facilitate a secondary route for American forces to ensure that they could not be completely bogged down on a single route north. To secure this route, however, TFT would need to seize the southern bridge of Nasiriyah which crossed the Euphrates River, and the northern bridge which crossed the Saddam Canal. Connecting these two bridges was a 4-kilometer stretch of road that ran through the heart of the city known eerily as "Ambush Alley."

Nasiriyah was not only important to U.S. forces. It was also highly valuable to Iraq, and its value could not be overstated. As one of the largest cities in the country at the time, Nasiriyah was home to more than 560,000 people. Strategically, it housed multiple Iraqi military units which would present opposition to U.S. forces looking to seize control of the main roads and bridges.

In addition to the conventional military, Nasiriyah was known to be occupied by

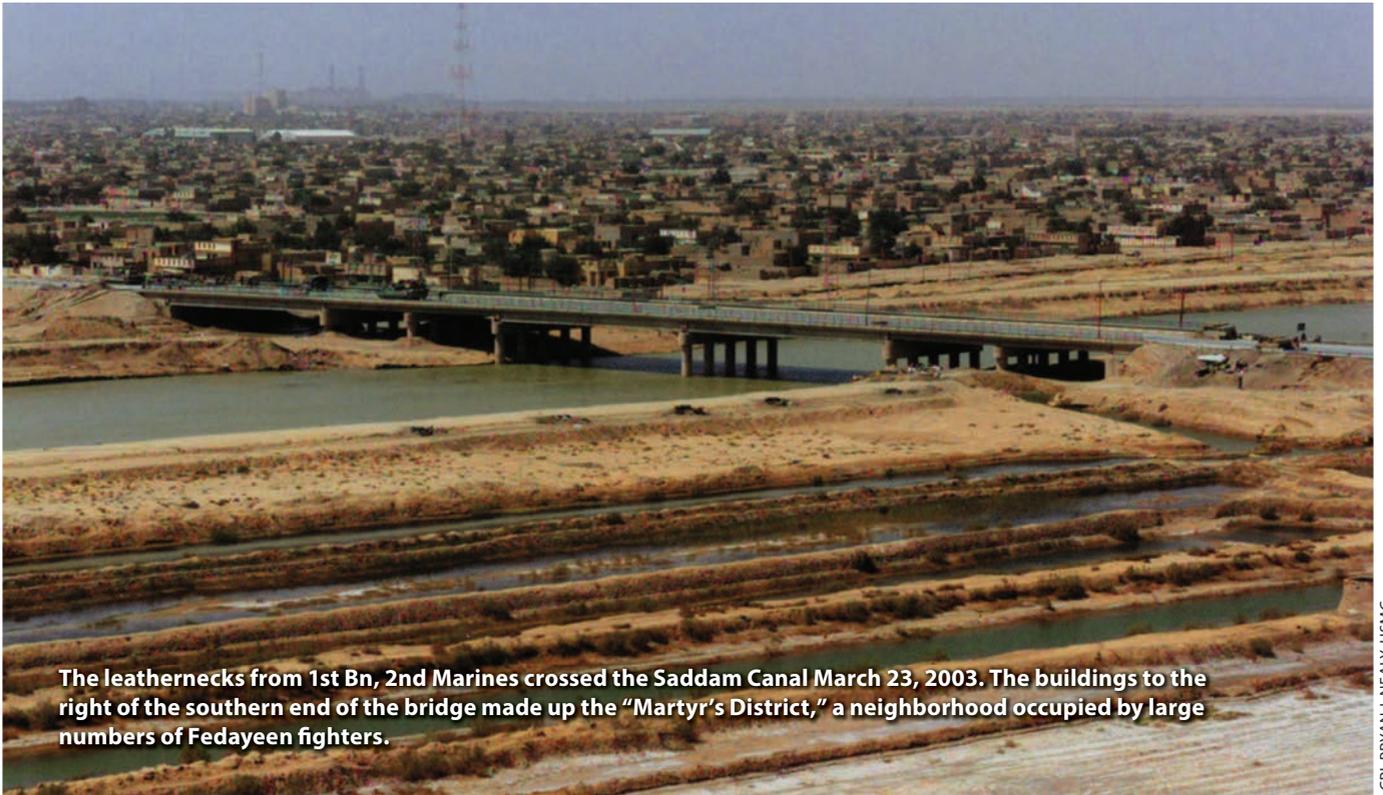


thousands of Ba'ath party loyalists and Iraqi Fedayeen fighters, some of the most ruthless and loyal devotees of the Saddam regime. For all these reasons and more, it was a logical assumption that the city was important to the regime, but its significance had even deeper roots.

With limited time to maneuver his units for this offensive, BGen Natonski decided to forego meeting with his battalion commanders and instead passed word over the radio that Nasiriyah was to be seized by TFT. Lieutenant Colonel Rick Grabowski, the commanding officer of

1/2, was tasked as the leading edge of TFT, which would be the first force to seize the bridges and wait for relief by 2/8 later in the day. With only hours left to commence the assault, Grabowski passed orders to his exhausted Marines who were low on everything from sleep to fuel.

With a clear set of orders, 1/2 approached the outskirts of town as day broke and the sun rose over the sprawling desert city of Nasiriyah. It did not take long for those initial tenets of war—which have been explained and elaborated on by military theorists Sun Tzu and



LCPL BRYAN J. NEALY, USMC

The leathernecks from 1st Bn, 2nd Marines crossed the Saddam Canal March 23, 2003. The buildings to the right of the southern end of the bridge made up the “Martyr’s District,” a neighborhood occupied by large numbers of Fedayeen fighters.

Lehew recalled that there was an eerie silence as his AAVs entered the city and secured the southern bridge. This silence only lasted a few seconds before it felt as if the whole world exploded.

Clausewitz and are viewed as innate to the conduct of warfare and unbounded by time—to come to fruition in a multitude of ways.

As the convoy neared the southern bridge, it came to a halt to refuel and prepare for the push. It was at this time that the forward element of 1/2, Maj William Peeples’ tank company, came upon a U.S. HMMWV barreling toward them. Inside was a frantic Army captain, Troy King, exclaiming that his soldiers were still in the town and needed help. Soon after, the tanks reported passing

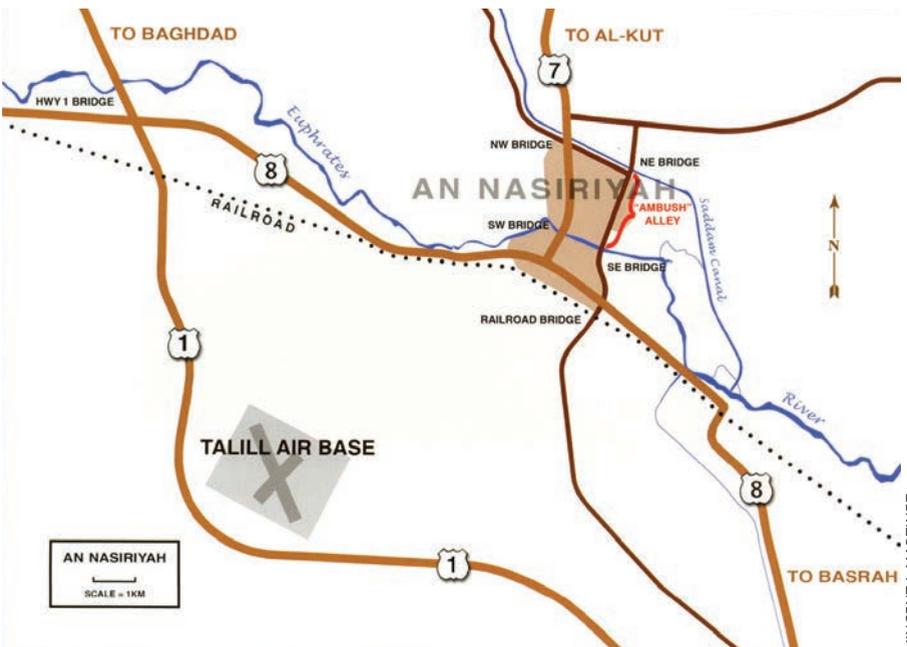
abandoned, shot, and burning U.S. military vehicles.

Although radio nets were already cluttered with overuse, news of the U.S. soldiers ahead immediately cut through the noise to gain the attention of the leadership of TFT. At this point, it was widely understood that the Marines of TFT were the most northern conventional forces on this route which meant nobody should be ahead of them in the city.

As the tank company began to engage enemy T-62s in the open, a rescue element of assault amphibious vehicles (AAVs) was led by Gunnery Sergeant Justin Lehew, the AAV platoon sergeant, to rescue the stranded soldiers. After recovering the shot and injured soldiers and bringing them back to the Marine convoy for medical help, 1/2 was ready to assault the city. The only issue now was that the tanks would not be leading the assault as they were now dangerously low on fuel and would need to stay back to gravity-feed their behemoth vehicles.

With resolve to make the time hack established, a plan was devised for “Alpha” Company to hold the southern bridge while LtCol Grabowski and Bravo Company entered the city first. Bravo Co would attempt to take a right upon entering the city before orienting north to proceed to the northern bridge.

This was thought to be the best route to avoid having the battalion straight go through Ambush Alley. Charlie Co would be responsible for crossing after Bravo



VINCENT J. MARTINEZ

Co and then seizing and holding the northern bridge over the Saddam Canal. Lehw recalled that there was an eerie silence as his AAVs entered the city and secured the southern bridge. This silence only lasted a few seconds before it felt as if the whole world exploded. A barrage of combined arms commenced firing on the Marines of 1/2.

Bravo Co successfully crossed the bridge and executed their right turn, avoiding Ambush Alley and entering a large field on the right side of the town. Momentarily, it felt as though this route would serve its purpose as an effective bypass. To their dismay, this plan crumbled as soon as the dirt they were on gave way, and vehicles began to sink into a heavy mixture of mud and sewage that had been hidden by a hard crust layer.

With many of the vehicles of Bravo Co now stuck outside the city, LtCol Grabowski attempted to regain communication with his Charlie Co commander to tell them to push through Ambush Alley as their alternate route was not feasible. Unfortunately, communication via radio had been an issue since the beginning of the invasion. It was now compounded by buildings blocking the line of sight and an abundance of city powerlines. Grabowski was cut off from communicating with his other companies, an unfortunate circumstance that would spell more doom for the Marines of 1/2 than anyone could have imagined at the time.

Crossing the southern bridge with no Bravo Co in sight, Capt Daniel J. Wittnam, Charlie Co's commanding officer, concluded that Bravo must have pushed straight up Ambush Alley so he decided to follow in decisive action to get to the northern bridge and seize it



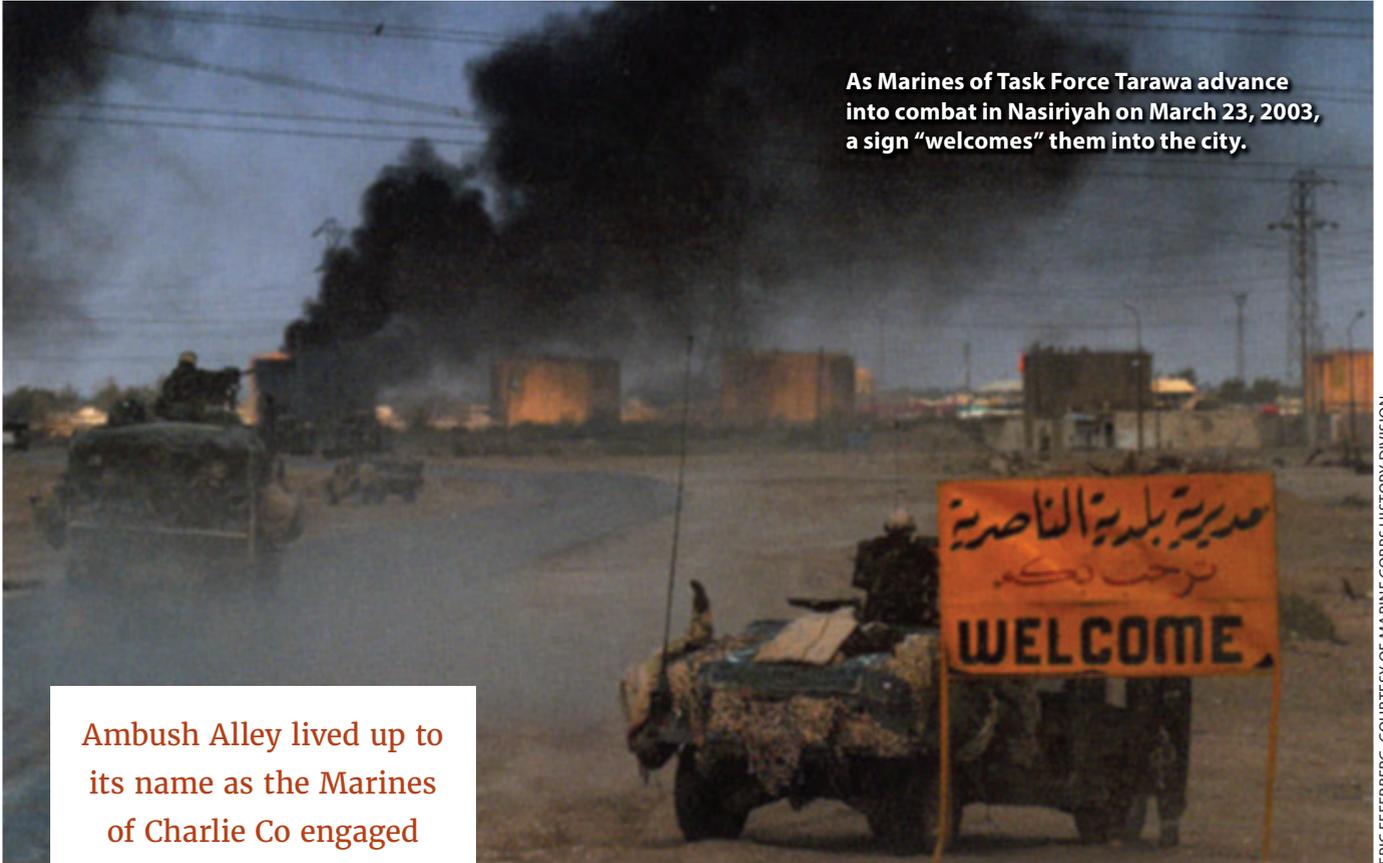
Above: Marines traveling in an AAV approach Nasiriyah on March 23, 2003.



Above: Marines in Nasiriyah are mounted on a humvee designed for the M220 TOW missile launcher and equipped with an M240G machine gun.

An M1A1 Abrams tank from Co A, 8th Tank Bn and an FMC AAV-7A1 attached to Co C, 1st Bn, 2nd Marines, were among the first units to traverse "Ambush Alley" on March 23, 2003.





As Marines of Task Force Tarawa advance into combat in Nasiriyah on March 23, 2003, a sign “welcomes” them into the city.

ERIC FEFERBERG, COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

Ambush Alley lived up to its name as the Marines of Charlie Co engaged fighters on the streets, in buildings, and on rooftops as they drove straight through the kill zone ...



ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF G/SGT CHASE MCGRORTY-HUNTER, USMC

As depicted in this artist’s rendering of the event, hostile fire from the rooftops of Ambush Alley destroys the AAV on the road below, causing it to erupt in flames. (The illustration was commissioned by the author for use when teaching about the battle.)



COURTESY OF GYSGT CHASE MCGRORTY-HUNTER, USMC

Marines killed in action during the fighting at An Nasiriyah.

in line with the commander’s intent he had received.

Ambush Alley lived up to its name as the Marines of Charlie Co engaged fighters on the streets, in buildings, and on rooftops as they drove straight through the kill zone and made it to their destination on the opposite side of the northern bridge where they fanned out AAVs and dismounted to battle positions. The Marines of Charlie Co were thrust immediately into intense enemy contact from across the bank of the Saddam Canal and fought for hours with only their organic weapons systems due to the degraded communications that would not allow Capt Wittnam to call on air, 81 mm mortars, or artillery support. It was during this time that the mortar section of Charlie Co got into a deadly exchange of indirect fire with the Iraqi military who were able to land a direct hit on the section, killing multiple Marines and wounding many more.

Back on the right flank of the city, the Marines of Bravo Co believed that they were still the northern element of 1/2 and had no idea that Charlie Co had already pushed north of the city to take control of the northern bridge. Capt Dennis Santare, the forward air controller (FAC) for Bravo Co, had only been in sporadic contact with the battalion FAC as he braved the intense volume of fire that Bravo was experiencing as they tried to move north out of the kill zone.

His only working radio was his air control, and he was able to contact two A-10 Warthogs from the Pennsylvania

Air National Guard who were on station above the city. Orienting the birds north toward the most concentrated enemy fire being received, the pilots identified multiple vehicles north of the Saddam Canal. Exercising his best judgment, which he believed would save the lives of the Marines in 1/2, Capt Santare cleared the pilots for Type III close air support (CAS).

Although he did not have eyes on the target or the aircraft, they were authorized to engage. This order for Type III CAS could typically come solely from LtCol Grabowski, but there was no way to contact him, and time was of the essence

in this fight. This initiative would prove fateful as the A-10s began to do strafing runs on the Marines of Charlie Co below who were already in a fight for their lives against the enemy.

Now, under the intense fire of U.S. aircraft, Marines from Charlie Co did their best to load casualties into AAVs for immediate transport to the medical aid at the southern bridge. This task was made more difficult as the fog of war was intensified by the blue-on-blue attack coming from the sky.

As GySgt Lehew engaged the enemy around him from his AAV positioned on the southern bridge, one of his crew-



JOE RAEDLE, COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

Marines shield an injured comrade while pinned down in a firefight during the Battle of An Nasiriyah.



JOE RAEDLE, COURTESY OF MARINE CORPS HISTORY DIVISION

TFT Marines search the hulk of a destroyed AAV-7A1 track in Nasiriyah in late March 2003. This vehicle, attached to 1st Bn, 2nd Marines, was destroyed while traversing Ambush Alley.

members exclaimed, “Look at those idiots going the wrong way.”

GySgt Lehew looked back to see an AAV heading south down Ambush Alley toward his position on the southern bridge. His immediate thought was, “Those better not be my guys. I didn’t tell anyone to move,” but before he could utter any words, an Iraqi fighter from the rooftop of a building fired an RPG through the top hatch of the AAV. The explosion slammed the 25-ton vehicle to a dead stop and ripped off the troop ramp from the rear of the vehicle. A second fighter jumped out from the ground level of a building north of the now static vehicle and sent a second RPG crashing straight into the troop compartment.

“Doc, grab your bag!” GySgt Lehew yelled as he and his hospital corpsman ran through Ambush Alley to aid the Marines who were now trapped inside the burning twisted metal of a once powerful AAV. The pair would spend the next hour digging through the wreckage as the battle raged on around them to rescue the sole survivor from the troop compartment, Corporal Matthew Juska.

The anticipation for Alpha Co to get off the southern bridge and move to rendezvous with Charlie Co at the northern bridge had been growing for hours in the mind of Capt Michael

An Iraqi fighter from the rooftop of a building fired an RPG through the top hatch of the AAV. The explosion slammed the 25-ton vehicle to a dead stop and ripped off the troop ramp from the rear of the vehicle.

Brooks who had been waiting for 2/8 to relieve him of his position. However, when 1stLt Eric Meador, Charlie Co’s executive officer, arrived at the southern bridge after traversing Ambush Alley and let Capt Brooks know of their current situation up north, Capt Brooks knew he could wait no longer.

The Marines of Alpha Co loaded all vehicles and made a daring push directly through Ambush Alley at speeds above 40 miles an hour while engaging the enemy the entire way. With the arrival at the northern bridge of Alpha Co and shortly after Bravo Co, the first day of battle ended for the Marines of 1/2.

TFT would participate in some of the heaviest urban combat seen by Marines since Hue City over the next week as they

secured Nasiriyah. The mission to allow follow-on troops from the 1st MarDiv to traverse Highway 7 to Baghdad was accomplished; the flow of troops began the very next day.

In total, 18 Marines and 11 soldiers would lose their lives during the first day of battle in Nasiriyah. The 11 soldiers had been ambushed in the city and six more had been captured as prisoners of war. They turned out to have been from the 507th Maintenance Company and had gotten lost trying to link up with their convoy, mistakenly entering the city of Nasiriyah.

Americans back at home would be captivated by the story of one of those young soldiers, Private Jessica Lynch, whose nighttime rescue by special operations teams from a hospital in Nasiriyah was a defining moment at the beginning of the war.

Authors bio: GySgt McGrorty-Hunter is a cyber network chief who is currently serving as a faculty advisor at the Staff Noncommissioned Officers Academy aboard MCB Quantico. Recently, he served with 1st Battalion, 4th Marines where he dep oyed twice in support of the 31st and 15th MEU. 🇺🇸

CAMP LEJEUNE JUSTICE ACT OF 2022



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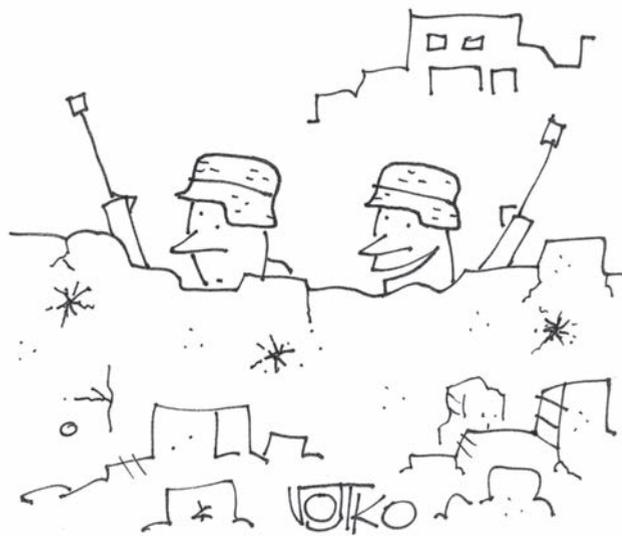
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"We have a date with the enemy so bring protection."



"Of course they're running away. I didn't throw a grenade. I threw an MRE."



"Maybe we should look for another foxhole."



"That's 30 miles. I'll never tell the Gunny again how I've got no plans for the weekend."



"Your video game controller isn't going to work on this battlefield, Marine."



"Did anyone else get chocolate pudding in their MRE?"



"In my day, safe spaces were foxholes."

The Notional Leader

By Sgt Jessica Hyunjong Suh, USMC

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

"Goodnight, Chesty!"

Two words screamed at 10:01 p.m. following the closing notes of "Taps." Some cried out of thrown open windows with guttural and violent confidence, others in a mellow singsong underlaid by love of Corps. Some evenings it was a few lone voices, and others it was a grand chorus. But in all my time in the schoolhouse, there was never a night I went to sleep without hearing those two words echoing off the walls of my barracks.

Chesty Puller: Every Marine's favorite hero. At PT, we would do 100 push-ups and one for Chesty. At formation, it was a resounding "Kill!" in celebration or acknowledgement and then one more for Chesty. At the bar, someone would order a round of shots and always, there was one for Chesty.

But who was Chesty Puller? I certainly had never heard of him before I joined the Marine Corps. Ask almost any young Marine and one might be met with fumbling words, a mention of Guadalcanal, or something about "Five Navy Crosses, sir!" Beyond that, the details start going hazy and your average Private First Class Schmuckatelli may then ask, "Or was that Dan Daly?" Because despite the pride we take in our history and the way we live daily in our traditions, we do not regularly encounter Chesty Puller. He is not calling for us to pick up our rifles and magazines and follow him into battle. He is not yelling orders from the front of our platoon above the sound of bullets snapping overhead. He is the vague, conceptual figure in the backs of our minds urging us to consistently pursue excellence. He is the amalgamation of our history and our values into an ideal, into the notional leader.

In the Marine Corps today, we are



As one of the most decorated Marines in the history of the Marine Corps, LtGen Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller is the only Marine to ever receive five Navy Crosses.

proud of our constant endeavors for excellence. We are loud, we are sure, and we strive to live by our values of honor, courage, and commitment. At a company barbecue, we line up by rank, junior to senior. Often the officers are the ones serving us from behind the plastic folding tables that bend beneath the weight of mouth-watering grub. Or they are the ones chopping, mixing, and cooking at the grills, burning our burgers and brats. Because leaders eat last. They sleep in the dirt with the rest of us out in the field. They are the last ones up at night keeping

the Marines on fire watch company with a game of cards. And they are the first ones up in the morning, making a ruckus between sleeping systems and MARPAT tarps. Because leaders lead by example.

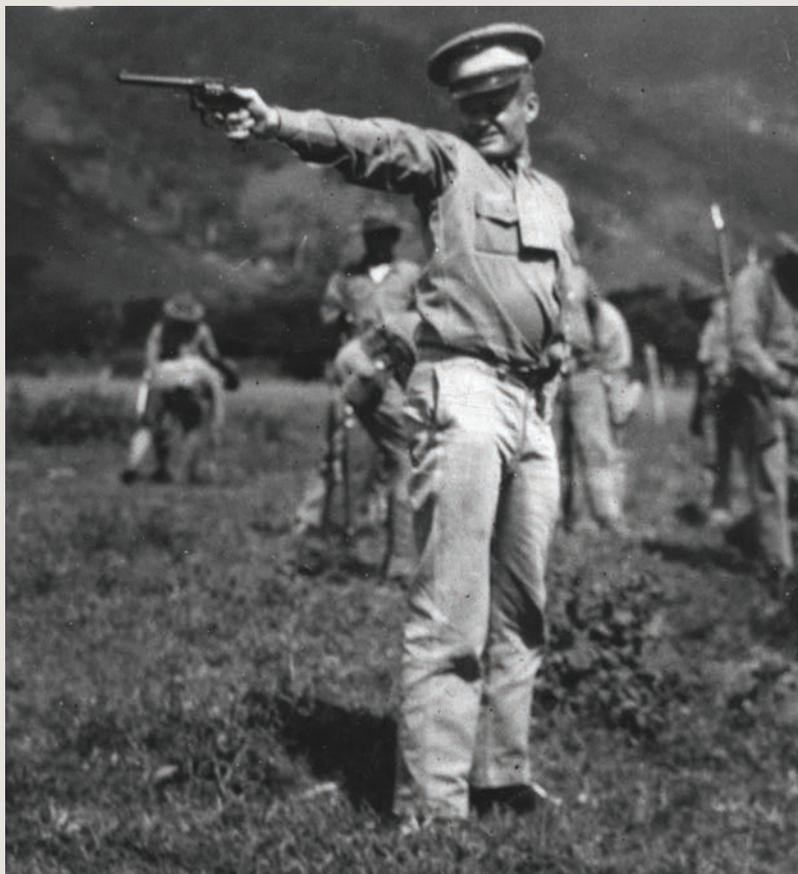
But again, ask any young Marine, or even the leaders themselves, why officers eat last or why we "lead by example, lead like a Marine," and most will answer "because that is just who we are, because that is just how we do and have always done. Because that is the Marine Corps." But indeed, these customs and attitudes were not conjured out of thin air. They

As the commanding officer of 1st Battalion, 7th Marines LtCol Puller went with his men to Guadalcanal in the summer of 1942.



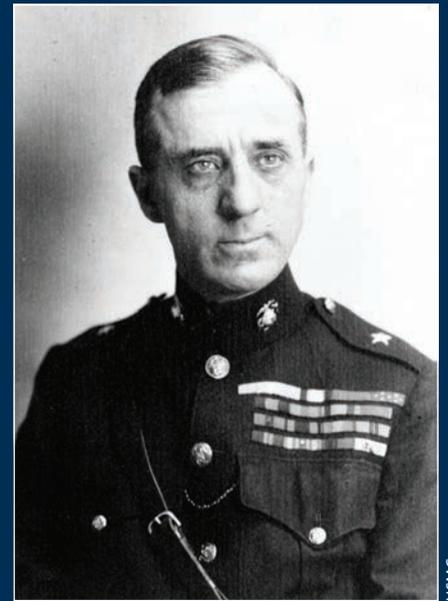
COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Ask any young Marine, or even the leaders themselves, why officers eat last or why we “lead by example, lead like a Marine,” and most will answer “because that is just who we are.” ... These customs and attitudes were not conjured out of thin air. They have tangible origins.



USMC

Chesty Puller circa 1931, honing his skills on the range.



USMC

Smedley Butler



USMC

Dan Daly



USMC

Lewis “Chesty” Puller

have tangible origins. They have a written history. It begins with a young corporal commissioning and serving in Haiti and ends with a lieutenant general being posthumously promoted after 37 years of service. Lewis Burwell Puller, the legendary leader and most decorated Marine in the Corps, left those traditions as his legacy. He lived with his men and ate with them in the same mess hall. He carried his own ruck and marched at the head of his battalion. In combat, his diet consisted of the same K-rations as everyone else, and he was just another pair of boots on the ground.

In his battles in Haiti against the Cacos, he showed his first signs of promise, and for his actions in Nicaragua, he was awarded his first two Navy Crosses. Later during World War II on Guadalcanal, his quick thinking and initiative saved hundreds of men, and with his knowledge of warfare, on Peleliu, he proved himself to be a fearless leader. In Korea, he was awarded his fifth Navy Cross after the Battle of Chosin Reservoir, which he and his men fought with unbelievable bravery and valor.

At Chosin, having just set up a base camp, he and his Marines were attacked by the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Chesty is remembered to have declared, "We've been looking for the enemy for several days now. We've finally found them. We're surrounded. That simplifies our problem of finding these people and



Sgt John Basilone was awarded the Medal of Honor in 1943.

... killing them."

His men held their ground against regiment after regiment, wave after wave of attacks. Despite tragic casualties and the fatigue of combat, the below freezing temperatures and diminishing rations, Chesty kept his men faithful. One Marine later reported "Puller gave us pride in some way I can't describe ... He kept building up our morale higher and higher ..."

After days of fighting, they were ordered to break out through Hungnam

port, and he and his task force opened an escape route amidst an enemy force of 80 thousand soldiers. After bringing his men, vehicles, equipment, wounded and dead to safety with immeasurable courage and inimitable confidence, he pointedly reminded journalists that "this was no retreat," they had simply "about-faced and attacked."

Between his experiences on the battlefield, he led a detachment in China, instructed the future generation of officers at The Basic School, and commanded stateside garrison units. He always advocated for more rigorous training, held his Marines to the highest standards of tradition and courtesy, and was the exemplar of integrity and tenacity. Today his is the name ringing off barracks walls after "Taps."

All things considered, the reverence surrounding this cultural icon may cause Marines to question whether they can live up to the expectations. This larger-than-life, battlefield persona of Chesty Puller is impossible to channel when carrying out mundane duties. When inspecting a Marine's 180-square-foot room for field day or teaching a hip-pocket class on how to properly heat up an MRE main meal, Marines are not invoking the incredible reputations of our hallowed forefathers. Truthfully, even Chesty himself probably could not live up to his own legend when brushing his teeth, shaving his face, and putting on his trousers one leg at a time.

Prior to departing for his new job as assistant Division commander, Chesty Puller, left, inspects his former staff and battalion commanders in 1951.



However, he did not have to be perfect. Extraordinary figures like Chesty Puller, Smedley Butler, Dan Daly and John Basilone make up the Marine Corps notional leader. They do not have to be literal. They are ideal, personal, conceptual. They are the exemplification of our organization's values and the epitome of the hard-charging hero. They, their lessons, and all for which they stand have been internalized and unconsciously translated into everyday Marine Corps culture.

When we remember the wild tales and the intense ferocity of Chesty Puller, we are reinforcing the ideal of the notional leader. When we honor the maverick Major General Smedley Butler, awarded two Medals of Honor and known by his troops as "The Fighting Hell-Devil Marine" and "The Leatherneck's Friend," we are sustaining the concept of the notional leader. We are immortalizing the actions he took in five separate major military campaigns, including those which earned him the Marine Corps Brevet Medal during the Boxer Rebellion.

Beside Butler stands Sergeant Major Dan Daly, who also wears around his neck two of those same five-pointed brass medals. Daly had famously galvanized his men during the Battle of Belleau Wood by crying, "Come on you sons of bitches! Do you want to live forever?" He too had fought in the Boxer Rebellion, in Haiti and in World War I and was described by Butler as "The fightin'est Marine I ever knew!"

This fervent spirit of the Marine Corps is held in heroes like Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone who said of his men, "I loved them as much as my own brothers." His role in the invasion of Guadalcanal is celebrated in television shows and biographies, and his courage at Iwo Jima is commemorated on plaques affixed to the fronts of Marine Corps buildings. There are countless others, named and unnamed, praised and forgotten who have formed and fostered this organization and ultimately, us.

From the moment we align our feet on those recruit depot yellow footprints, we are flooded by the ethos, indoctrinated into the brotherhood, and ingrained with the principles and virtues that drive every Marine to be better today than we were yesterday. Marines are different, we say. We are stronger, faster, and more dedicated. We are the few, the proud, the one percent of the American population who are willing to fight and fight first.

Our recruiters, drill instructors, and platoon commanders introduced us to the notional leader, transformed us into students of that leader, and supervised

Our recruiters, drill instructors, and platoon commanders introduced us to the notional leader, transformed us into students of that leader, and supervised our growth to continue to pass down that leader's legacy.



First Sergeant Daniel Daly, right, was awarded the Medaille Militaire, the third highest military award in the French Republic, for his actions in France in June 1918.

our growth to continue to pass down that leader's legacy. They were the ones who sat across from us in the recruiting office and convinced us to sign that dotted line. They were the ones who told us on Black Friday, "A Marine is characterized as one who possesses the highest military virtues." They were the ones who trained us in our duties and developed us into leaders ourselves. And behind every recruiting advertisement and beneath every drill instructor-ism, between the lines of every hardcover green Marine notebook

and sewn into every sharp uniform, is the notional leader. Within each of us today is the notional leader. We were trained and taught by those standing before us, and we are following in the footsteps of exceptional legacies.

Trace the history and chain of command up, and we see this notional leader taking shape. Study each generation back down, and we see it driving our Marine Corps determination to stand apart. Today, in the highest position in the Marine Corps, our Commandant stands on the shoulders

An elevated view of the guided missile frigate
USS *Lewis B. Puller* (FFG-23) underway, Sept. 17, 1983.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Perhaps there is one specific person who stands out when we think about who most influenced our Marine Corps careers. However, after a moment of reflection, dozens of faces, words, and actions are guaranteed to manifest in our memories.

of every giant who has contributed to this concept. General David H. Berger is paving the future for the next generation of warfighters who will stand upon his shoulders. He is the notional leader.

The best leader takes care of his or her fellow Marines and shows a vested interest in their success and wellbeing. Butler, in combat during the Boxer Rebellion, climbed out of a trench to rescue a wounded officer despite being shot in the process. A leader holds herself accountable and is constantly striving to be better. Basilone, always seeking to learn something new, exchanged skills with a corpsman to improve his knowledge of first aid during a winter exercise at New River. A leader knows each of his men and women as individuals and builds trust in his relationships with them. Daly's popularity is attributed to not only his bravery and discipline, but also to his attention to the needs of his men. Reportedly, he refused to be commissioned, saying he would rather stay

close to them and serve as "an outstanding sergeant than just another officer." A leader may make mistakes, but he takes full responsibility and initiative to fix them. Chesty Puller purportedly once fined himself \$100 for the accidental discharge of his weapon when the standard fine was \$20. These stories, these characteristics, these Marines of history are the notional leader.

Perhaps there is one specific person who stands out when we think about who most influenced our Marine Corps careers. However, after a moment of reflection, dozens of faces, words, and actions are guaranteed to manifest in our memories. That is the notional leader.

It is our drill instructors screaming at us as glow belt and go-faster wearing recruits, our platoon commanders counseling us as salty lance corporals, and our senior enlisted leaders mentoring us as experienced NCOs. It is those who inspire us to set lofty goals, and then propel us to the finish line to achieve

them. It is what drives every man and woman who wears our uniform to pursue the remarkable Marine Corps phenomenon of above and beyond.

It is the chorus of voices after "Taps" calling out to that long, illustrious line of professionals who have worn the bloodstripe so proudly.

Author's bio: Sgt Jessica H. Suh enlisted in October 2018 and graduated from Parris Island and SOI West. She spent 18 months in MOS school in Monterey, Calif., and another six months at Goodfellow Air Force Base where she was promoted to corporal.

She deployed to Okinawa on the Operational Liaison Team–Japan in December 2021 and was meritoriously promoted to sergeant.

Sgt Suh is currently stationed aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii and serving as a cryptologic linguist with 3rd Radio Battalion. 🇺🇸

LEATHERNECK

MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

WRITING CONTEST OPEN TO ALL MARINES

PRIZES:

1st Place: \$1,000 + an engraved plaque

2nd Place: \$750 + an engraved plaque

3rd Place: \$500 + an engraved plaque

TOPICS:

Leadership – Describe an outstanding Marine Corps leader and what makes him or her so successful.

Current Events – Describe a recent event and the impact it had on the Marines involved.

History – Describe a little-known aspect of a battle or an individual Marine that others may not know about, i.e. “the rest of the story.”

DETAILS:

- Maximum 2,000 words
- Must include contact information: grade, name, unit, SNCOIC/OIC, email and phone number.
- Submit electronically to leatherneck@mca-marines.org in Microsoft Word Format

SUBMISSIONS ACCEPTED: 1 Jan - 31 March 2023



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Leatherneck Laffs



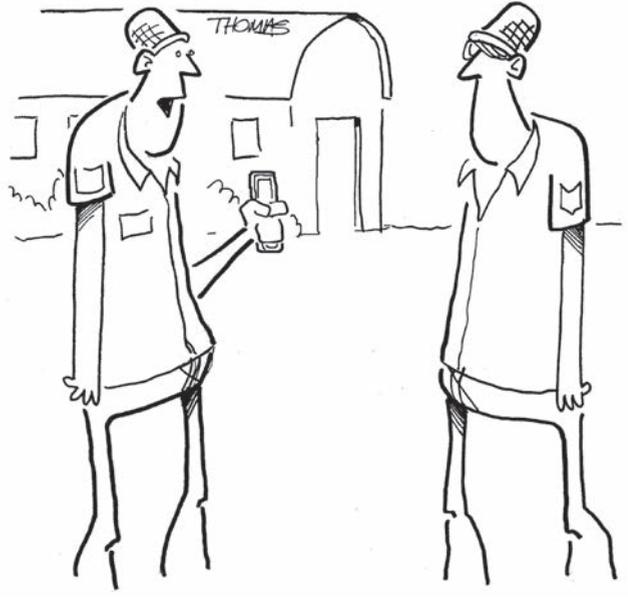
"Just marching gets old. When do we spell stuff out like they do at halftime?"



"We're employing a new cyber strategy. We're giving the enemy's phone numbers to telemarketers."



"Drill instructors love this month."



"I want you to identify as a butt-kicking, mean Marine and get up there and take names! Understand me?"

"I have the Major on mute. Is that considered insubordination?"

Quantico, Va.

Active-Duty Marine Hosts 24-Hour Walk/Run to Benefit the Semper Fi & America's Fund

On Saturday Nov. 12, 2022, Master Sergeant Clinton Firstbrook, a senior enlisted advisor of the Communication Strategy Operations Division at Marine Corps Base Quantico, hosted a 24-hour walk/run around the town of Quantico to benefit the Semper Fi & America's Fund, a nonprofit organization that provides a variety of programs to wounded veterans across the country. He applied to fundraise on the behalf of SF&AF as a community athlete via the Boston Marathon charity program.

"It was more like a 36-hour event as I was up first thing that morning putting together all the last-minute details," said MSgt Firstbrook. "Thankfully, I had a couple of crucial volunteers and my family on hand at the beginning who helped ensure it kicked off smoothly." More than 100 participants accompanied him throughout the walk. Among the attendees were several former Afghan Special Forces members, some of whom were wounded in action, who attended the event with FAMIL USA, a nonprofit organization that provides humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees. Brownies from Girl Scout Troop 80185 also participated as did as Kevin Brown, the mayor of the town of Quantico, who stopped by to show his support.

The rain, which began that evening, didn't dampen Firstbrook's spirit as he continued to push on despite the added weather difficulty. "It [the rain] stopped just before midnight," said Firstbrook, "Although from there the wind got crazy. It even blew my tent away a few times despite several weights holding it down. But the worst was when the temperature plummeted. I had to change clothes a few times and blast the heat in my car for a few



NANCY S. LICHTMAN

minutes so I didn't get hypothermia." As he ran through the streets of Quantico in freezing temperatures, a few friends and Quantico residents brought him hot coffee and kept him company along the way to help him through those late hours.

Eight other organizations including Toys for Tots and the Marine Corps League Jack Maas Detachment, located in Fredericksburg, Va., were also in attendance. Each attending organization set up booths along the sidewalks, and all event proceeds and donations went directly to the Semper Fi & America's Fund, which continues to benefit United States veterans across the nation since its establishment in 2004.

By Briesa Koch, *Leatherneck*



COURTESY OF MSGT CLINTON FIRSTBROOK IV, USMC



COURTESY OF MSGT CLINTON FIRSTBROOK IV, USMC

Edison, N.J.



COURTESY OF JIM CURTIS

北米自衛隊 賞
シニアグラントマスター
ゲイリ リチャード アレクサンダー
免許 皆伝一名人
昭和四十年十月

NORTH AMERICAN SELF-DEFENSE ASSOCIATION
北米自衛隊

**SENIOR GRANDMASTER
GARY RICHARD ALEXANDER**

LIFETIME MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT

In recognition of Senior Grandmaster Alexander's distinguished lifetime of martial arts excellence, meritorious service, and exemplary conduct, integrity and character in support of the North American Self-Defense Association, NASDA awards him their most prestigious honor: Menkyo Kaiden - Meijin. This rare award is bestowed only upon the most accomplished martial artists in the NASDA family. Senior Grandmaster Alexander's relentless commitment warrant this acclamation. An internationally recognized leader, he reflects outstanding credit upon himself, his family, and the NASDA world-wide martial arts community.

Given at Edison ~ New Jersey ~ USA
This First Day of October, Two Thousand and Twenty-Two

JIM CURTIS, SOKE, JUDAN
Founder, Director of Development, NASDA

Marine Veteran Presented with High Martial Arts Honor

On Oct. 21, 2022, 83-year-old Gary Alexander received the title of Meijin, the highest title in traditional Japanese Budo, and was awarded a 10th degree black. Alexander received this prestigious achievement in recognition of his lifetime of martial arts excellence, service and character. He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1955 and served with Weapons Company, 1/9, until he was discharged in 1963. After his time on active duty, Alexander continued serving the Corps for more than six decades as a close combat instructor

and martial arts instructor, teaching recruits and Marines around the world.

Alexander gained global recognition in the martial arts community in 1962 when he became the first North American bare knuckle karate champion. Since then, he has earned numerous other accolades and awards. This most recent honor was presented by the North American Self Defense Association, founded by fellow Marine veteran Jim Curtis.

Submitted by Jim Curtis

Fredericksburg, Va.

Marine Corps League Detachment Celebrates Marine Corps Birthday at Monthly Meeting

On Nov. 19, 2022, the Marine Corps League Jack Maas Detachment located in Fredericksburg, Va., celebrated the Marine Corps Birthday during their monthly meeting at the Moose Family Center. The detachment was founded in June 2011 and was chartered by the Marine Corps League on July 23, 2011. In attendance was special guest, Lieutenant General John A. Toolan, USMC (Ret), Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Marine Corps Association. LtGen Toolan is pictured in the photo above, standing to the right of a detachment member preparing to cut the birthday cake.

The MCL and MCA are nonprofit organizations that support active-duty and veteran Marines across the nation.

Submitted by Tab Bartley



TAB BARTLEY

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



The Spirit of Basilone:

One Marine's Unofficial Mission To Preach The Belt-Fed Gospel

By Kyle Watts

In September of 2017, Adam Krick opened Instagram on his phone and created a new account. An idea had brewed inside his head for months. Too many accounts on Facebook or Instagram swooned over Special Forces, Special Operations, or any other “special” unit ad nauseam. Krick hoped to create a forum where he could recognize a tight-knit and motivated community that held a special place in his heart, the brotherhood of Marine machine-gunners.

From its humble origins, “Goons Up” rapidly evolved. Krick started by finding and following machine gunners with private accounts. Whenever they posted an inspiring photo or video, Krick asked if he could share it on Goons Up. The strategy worked brilliantly, and machine gunners across Instagram adopted “Goons Up” into the common language of the community. The account quickly became the online space where 0331s connected and celebrated their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS).

Krick tapped into a heritage and religion born long ago. His creation of Goons Up did not initiate this high level



COURTESY OF ADAM KRICK

Machine gunner Adam Krick at an Iraqi police station in Al-Iskandariyah, Iraq, during his first deployment in 2004.

of enthusiasm for his beloved belt-feds. He simply gave it a modern place to focus its energy. Something has always been different about machine-gunners. All Marines take pride over other branches of the armed services because of, well, everything. The infantry pushes this further, understanding they represent the backbone of the Corps. Machine-gunners, though, adhere to a cult within a cult that takes it to the extreme. For many, this “loud and proud” sense of belonging is not just obnoxious words or behavior. It represents a way of life. It reflects a calling, where tactical and technical proficiency trump all the “oorah” chest beating and “Animal Mother” tattoos.

“When I came up through Infantry Training Battalion (ITB), I had no idea I’d become a machine gunner,” remembered Sergeant Race Kilburn, an 0331 currently serving as a Combat Instructor at School of Infantry-West. “I thought I would become a rifleman and be part of that main effort.”

When he came to the split in training where each student received their MOS, the ITB staff gathered the student body together. A Marine from each 03 MOS went on stage before them and gave a



True disciples, spreading the belt-fed gospel with the enemy. (USMC photos)

two-minute presentation covering their job and why all the students should want to be part of it.

Kilburn remembers the scene vividly. “They had the rifleman come up and he says, ‘We’re the boots on the ground. We’re ready to put shit down. We are the main effort. Everyone else standing beside me right now is a support element.’ He went on and got the students all riled up. We all thought, ‘Oh man, here we go.’ Next, the mortarman comes up and he’s like, ‘We drop bombs from far away. Nobody can move without us.’ We were all like, ‘pffft, whatever.’ Then the assaultman comes up and says his piece and we all thought it sounded pretty

Krick tapped into a heritage and religion born long ago.

His creation of Goons Up did not initiate this high level of enthusiasm for his beloved belt-feds.

He simply gave it a modern place to focus its energy.

cool. All these guys spent their whole two minutes talking about how cool their MOS was and building it up.”

“Then the machine-gunner came up to say his part. I still remember this guy. He

came up to the stage and says, ‘Machine-gunners blow shit away, then the riflemen walk in to see everything dead. If you want to be a f--king machine gunner, you better be strong, you better be tall, and you better be tough.’ That’s all he said, then walked away. From that day on, I wanted to shoot belt-fed.”

These disciples of the belt-fed gospel extend through history, reaching back to the machine gun’s inception and implementation. Major Edward B. Cole served as the original prophet, authoring the Corps’ first “Field Book for Machine Gunners” in 1917. Cole became a martyr for the religion, dying a hero’s death in battle at Belleau Wood. Marines like John Basilone and Mitchell Paige arose as demigods in the eyes of future generations. Their grit and super-human

Machine-gunners from “Golf” Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines submitted their flag photo to Goons Up all the way from the Philippines during Exercise KAMANDAG in October 2022.



AUSTIN WILSON

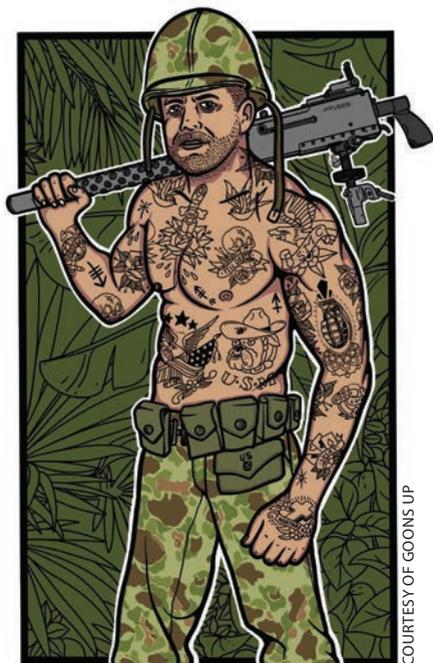
Krick desired to do more. He wanted a way to formally recognize machine-gunners, beyond an “ataboy” post or a pat on the back. What if he could give them an award?

feats of endurance formed the genesis of a holy spirit that all 0331s prayed might dwell within them. The award citations of dead machine-gunners long since passed wrote the gospel pages, setting high the standards for what was expected of anyone who believed they could carry the gun.

The success of Goons Up stemmed not just from the avid engagement of its followers, but also from the passion of its creator. Krick learned to eat, breathe, live and die by the gun through multiple combat tours as an 0331. The forefathers of his MOS inspired him to uphold their legacy. He took the machine-gunner’s creed to heart:

“We will cut our enemies down in droves. Our fires will be the substance of their nightmares. We will protect our brothers. The fields of the dead shall serve as evidence of our passing.”

Krick enlisted out of high school in April 2003 after watching the initial invasion of Iraq on TV. He joined 1st Bn, 2nd Marines at Camp Lejeune and deployed to Iraq for the first time in summer 2004. He returned to Iraq a second time in 2006 and a third time in March 2007, where he reenlisted. He spent three years



COURTESY OF GOONS UP

OLD BREED
Goons Up

One of many original designs available on the Goons Up website pays homage to machine gunners who have gone before.

of his second enlistment on Inspector-Instructor duty before ending his last year on active duty once more at Lejeune with 1st Battalion, 6th Marines.

Krick entered the civilian world as a forklift mechanic in 2011. He waited six years to create Goons Up and work towards his goal of establishing an 0331 community. As a husband, father, and full-time employee, Krick sacrificed sleep and other personal ambitions to

create a brand worthy of the heritage it represented. He entered the realm of an aspiring entrepreneur only after the community took off. The success of his e-commerce store mirrored the success of his Instagram account, becoming profitable enough to support Krick’s wife and six children. In December 2020, barely more than three years after making his first post, Krick quit his civilian job to run his business full-time.

Today, Krick operates Goons Up from his home in Pennsylvania. With nearly 10,000 posts, a thriving e-commerce store, and incredible numbers of likes, shares, and follows, “successful” fails to adequately describe the business’s meteoric rise. Krick posts every day, often multiple times a day. He mixes in history and humor, while focusing the account on his original founding purpose to highlight machine gunners and the weapons they love so much. Krick no longer needs to solicit individuals for content to share. Marines and soldiers around the world send him their photos and videos, often posing with one of the numerous flags sold on his store.

Even as Goons Up fulfilled its mission to connect and recognize the infantry, Krick desired to do more. He wanted a way to formally recognize machine-gunners, beyond an “ataboy” post or a pat on the back. What if he could give them an award? Without something to physically hand out, the award would be nothing more than another post on Instagram. He considered small trophies and statues. Finally, Krick stumbled across another Marine veteran-owned business called Blue Falcon Awards.

Blue Falcon perfected the art of satire and mock representations of true military

The holy trinity of Marine Corps machine-gunners: Col Mitchell Paige (left), Maj Edward B. Cole (center), and GySgt John F. Basilone (right).



USMC



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USMC

Sgt Race Kilburn, left, the first recipient of the Spirit of Basilone award, received his medal from a group of friends at a bar one night after work. The award presentations have evolved in formality since then, but Kilburn wouldn't have wanted it any other way.



COURTESY OF BLUEFALCON AWARDS

items. The business churns out rank insignia, badges, and challenge coins, all intended to look real until closer inspection reveals a gag alteration. Krick ended his search for the right type of award when he discovered Blue Falcon produced uniform medals, complete with custom ribbon colors and engraved images. With Blue Falcon providing his blank slate, Krick needed only to design and name the medal.

Naming his medal proved easy. For a United States Marine Corps machine-gunner, for anyone who knew anything about our Corps' beloved history and the heroes associated with it, there could be only one namesake: Basilone.

Every Marine of every MOS learned the name in boot camp. Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone inspired generations of warriors through his heroics in combat. He was the quintessential Marine Corps machine gunner and remains the Great Section Leader in the sky.

On Guadalcanal, Basilone and his few remaining Marines fought tenaciously to hold off wave after wave of Japanese attackers. Basilone moved from position to position with desperately needed ammo, repairing machine guns in the dark, and firing a heavy machine gun from the hip with his bare hands. At least 38 enemy dead were credited to him



COURTESY OF RACE KILBURN

before the night was out, and hundreds more to his Marines.

For his actions, Basilone received the Medal of Honor. His heroism, of course, proved only the beginning. His attitude was equally endearing. Basilone turned down a Presidential award ceremony, opting instead to receive the medal in the field, closer to his Marines. Next, he refused an officer's commission and desk job in Washington, insisting he return to combat in the Pacific. (*Editor's note: See "I'm Glad to Get Overseas Duty" in the February 2022 issue of Leatherneck to read an essay written by Basilone about how he was eager to get back to the fight.*) His further heroism and death in battle on Iwo Jima made him the only Marine of WW II to receive the Medal of Honor and Navy Cross and become one of the most iconic personalities in the history of the Corps. Other Marines before or since may have earned more medals, seen more combat, or done more for the image of our Corps. Even so, the legend of Basilone endures like Babe Ruth or Elvis. There simply can never be another Basilone.

Unlike other medals or trophies, the Goons Up medal was not merely named the "Basilone award," in honor or remem-

brance of its namesake. Krick added an additional descriptor that would drive home his intent; the "Spirit of Basilone" award. Though the man is gone and confined to photographs or stories told countless times, his spirit lives on today, thriving within the 0331 community.

Several years after hearing the competing MOS pitches at ITB, Race Kilburn served as a machine gun section leader with "Kilo" Company, 3rd Bn, 5th Marines. In March 2020, he became the first recipient of the Spirit of Basilone award. Krick worked behind the scenes to confirm Kilburn truly embodied the life as a disciple of the belt-fed gospel. As a six-time recipient of the "Gung Ho" award from each of the formal schools he'd attended, and after being meritoriously promoted to Sergeant, Kilburn certainly fit the bill. Once confirmed, Krick drafted an award citation and mailed his newly designed medal to a common friend he shared with Kilburn. The friend invited Kilburn to a bar after work one Friday night where a small, informal gathering of machine-gunners surprised him and presented him with the medal.

Kilburn had followed Goons Up since its inception but had never heard of the



COURTESY OF TAYLOR MATHIS

Sgt Taylor Mathis, center, the most recent recipient of the Spirit of Basilone medal. After 11 years in the Marines, Mathis said he values the award from Goons Up more than any other medal he has earned.

Spirit of Basilone award. He studied the medal, seeming just as real as any other he might wear on his Blues. The words “Spirit of Basilone” arched in a semi-circle above a silhouette of the legend himself, engraved on a gold medallion. A golden M1917 heavy machine gun, like what Basilone used in combat, hung beneath a brown and green ribbon, connecting the pieces together.

“What the heck is this?” Kilburn asked.

The gathered Marines explained it was a new award created by Goons Up, presented to him, complete with individual citation.

“When I became the first recipient, I thought it was cool, but I didn’t know if people would take it seriously, or if it would just put a target on my back as the guy who was receiving recognition for something not valuable,” Kilburn recalled. “I didn’t realize how much it would blow up.”

Krick posted photos and information

“Personally, I think this is the greatest award I’ve received. One, because my guys thought I was worthy of it, and two, having something named after Basilone, he is our legacy as machine gunners.

—Sgt Taylor Mathis

about his first recipient and how the medal would be given out moving forward. He began receiving nominations from different units around the Corps. Even Army units nominated soldiers for the award.

“I wanted to make something that went

a little further in helping to instill that machine gun pride that we’re so known for,” Krick stated in each post covering a recipient of the award. “It’s nothing official, but that doesn’t make it any less meaningful, at least not to me. The Spirit of Basilone medal is not for sale. If you want it, earn it. If you think you know someone who rates it, let me know!”

Krick started presenting the award once a quarter. Since its creation, the medal has been presented 10 times. One of these awards went to a soldier, Staff Sergeant William Hendry, a weapons squad leader in Red Platoon, Fox Troop, 2d Squadron, 3d Cavalry. The method of delivery evolved as well, growing in formality and scale since Sgt Kilburn received his medal in a bar. Many recipients received the medal in a formal ceremony conducted by their platoon, with their platoon commander and platoon sergeant pinning the medal on their blouses. On at least one occasion, the recipient’s battalion commander got involved and presented the medal in a formal ceremony just like any other “real” award would be given out.

As of this writing, Sgt Taylor Mathis is the most recent recipient of the award. Mathis is an 11-year veteran of the Corps, currently serving as a machine-gun section leader with “Graybeard” Guns, Lima Company, 3rd Bn, 7th Marines. The Marines surprised Mathis with the award shortly after the unit returned home from their most recent deployment. With over a decade’s worth of ribbons and medals on his dress blues, Mathis still values the Spirit of Basilone award over anything else.

“Personally, I think this is the greatest award I’ve received,” said Mathis. “One, because my guys thought I was worthy of it, and two, having something named after Basilone, he is our legacy as machine gunners. I can’t really wear it on my uniform, but it’s something I can carry on forever. It’s probably the most humbling thing I’ve gotten so far.”

This sentiment proves true for many Spirit of Basilone recipients. Sgt Anthony Wendlandt received his medal in a surprise ceremony on a Friday morning in June 2022. It was already going to be a big day for Wendlandt. That same afternoon, after five years as a machine gunner with 1st Bn, 4th Marines, he picked up his DD-214 and left active duty. Receiving the medal on his last day in uniform held special meaning.

“I had gotten a Navy Achievement Medal earlier that year after our second

Below: The Basilone Statue in the Veterans Park located in Basilone's hometown of Raritan, N.J.



ANTHONY WENDLANDT



COURTESY OF ANTHONY WENDLANDT

Above: Sgt Anthony Wendlandt received his Spirit of Basilone award the same day he picked up his DD-214 and left active duty.

Right: On his cross-country road trip, Anthony Wendlandt, left, stopped by the Goons Up headquarters in Pennsylvania so he could meet Adam Krick, the founder of Goons Up, in person.



COURTESY OF ANTHONY WENDLANDT



ANTHONY WENDLANDT

Anthony Wendlandt visited the grave of John Basilone during his cross-country pilgrimage after leaving active duty. He brought along his Spirit of Basilone Medal to pay his respects.

deployment, which I'm proud of because it is a recognition that I actually did my job well. But the Spirit of Basilone award, to me, meant more that I had left an impression on the guys that came after me. It isn't like you just met some certain criteria and get a medal for it. You don't get it just because you did something and looked good in front of higher. You earn it by being a good Marine, a good machine gunner, and a leader."

Wendlandt embarked from Camp Pendleton on a cross-country road trip. He stopped by Goons Up headquarters in Pennsylvania to meet Krick in person before continuing east. The journey became a pilgrimage of sorts, paying homage to the 0331 community, the legacy of John Basilone, and Wendlandt's own good fortune, having had the privilege to be part of it all. He traveled to Basilone's hometown of Raritan, N.J., where he visited the Basilone Statue and Veterans Park. The final leg of his journey brought him to Arlington National Cem-

etry. Wendlandt walked a quarter mile off the typically trodden pathways to section 12. There, below the Memorial Amphitheater and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Wendlandt kept vigil over the grave of his medal's namesake.

"To me it was very symbolic, bringing the award from California back to Basilone's grave in Arlington. I didn't even know he existed before I joined, other than watching "The Pacific" in high school. I thought the least I could do was to bring the award there and kind of have it come full circle. I still want to be what this award means; someone who gives a shit about being a machine gunner, is proud of being a machine-gunner, and did their job to the best of their ability every single day. I still have that spirit. I still have that pride, even post-military."

Since the creation of the Spirit of Basilone award, other social media accounts affiliated with Goons Up have followed suit. "Tubes Up," an account dedicated to mortarmen, drew inspiration



COURTESY OF BLUE FALCON AWARDS



COURTESY OF BLUE FALCON AWARDS

Goons Up served as the catalyst for other unofficial awards, such as the “Spirit of Sledge” (left) and the “Spirit of Ingram” (right) medals, now being presented by other Instagram accounts affiliated with Goons Up.

from famed Marine and author Eugene B. Sledge, best known for his epic memoir, “With the Old Breed: At Peleliu and Okinawa.” The “Spirit of Sledge” award recognizes mortarmen today who embody his spirit. Another account, “Corpsman Up,” quarterly presents the “Spirit of Ingram” award to U.S. Navy docs serving with Marines. Their medal is named in honor of Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Robert Ingram, a Vietnam War veteran and recipient of the Medal of

Honor and the Silver Star. As “unofficial” awards such as these continue gaining recognition, only time will tell how they will evolve and the impact they will make.

For some Marines, hitting the fleet out of basic training is a stark reality check. It’s one thing to toil and sweat with your squad through training, firing your weapon and training to be a killer. It’s quite another thing to spend your boot year in the fleet hating life, cleaning the

In an online world of slander, negativity and pointless memes, Goons Up serves as a beacon of hope for what social media can and should be. The community recognizes people who care about their job.

first sergeant’s office every day and police calling around the barracks. Some Marines lose the sense of pride they felt on graduation day. In the extreme, it even becomes cool to be the “shit bag” who bucks the system and takes pride in how much he doesn’t care. Adam Krick has made it his mission to combat that mentality. Goons Up shows infantry Marines their job is really, truly awesome, and recognizes them amongst their peers for working hard. It encourages Marines to perfect their craft. It provides NCOs with current and relevant material happening around the Marine Corps that they can use to train and motivate their junior Marines.

In an online world of slander, negativity and pointless memes, Goons Up serves as a beacon of hope for what social media can and should be. The community recognizes people who care about their job. It encourages Marines to consider why they joined in the first place, and what they can do to make their MOS better.

“I give all the credit to Adam for starting the ripple, that turned into a wave, and into a tsunami of a community through social media that is 100 percent backing the Marines who want to do good in the Marine Corps,” said Sgt Kilburn. “How many meme pages are out there, or how many pages complaining about how dumb things are, or how our commanders are not smart and don’t know what we should know? With all of that going around, I think it’s good to see we are winning the fight on social media of give a shit about your job and it will give back.” 🦖

The 0331s from “Fox” Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines brought their Goons Up logo flag to the 247th Marine Corps Birthday Ball in November 2022.



JACOB STICKLER

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The Sandstone Sculptures of Iwo Jima

By Geoffrey W. Roecker

George Barnard Kress saw more of the Pacific than most enlisted men attached to the 4th Marine Division during World War II. A former photographer for the *Atlanta Journal* and *New Orleans Item* newspapers, Kress carried his camera into combat in the Marshall Islands, the Marianas and Iwo Jima. His exploits earned him two Air Medals and a field commission; his photographs appeared in newspapers across the country and *Life* magazine.

Kress took hundreds of photographs on Iwo Jima but found himself drawn to one unique subject. As he traversed the rocky terrain between headquarters and the front lines, Kress noticed a strange type of battlefield art: sandstone carvings standing mute in old fighting positions and bivouacs. These sculptures showcased a range of abilities and sentiments, from crude faces and graffiti to elaborate memorials. Kress was fascinated by the intricacy and intimacy of the largely anonymous works. “Many of the artists were probably killed, and all knew that they would be leaving Iwo behind them soon and had no desire to immortalize themselves on the naked rock which had brought them so much grief,” he noted in one of the captions he wrote. “These are strange monuments to a historic American battle.”

So must have thought the artist who carved a sardonic memorial dedicated to five imaginary foes: Hirno, Sino, Spinko, Duno and Nomo Iwo. The Marine signed his work “by Jima.”

Several of these sculptures eventually found their way to one of Iwo Jima’s three Division cemeteries and were visited by hundreds of Marines searching for a buddy’s resting place. While some commemorated individuals, the anonymity of most works—unsigned by creators and dedicated to all who fought and fell—created a universal grieving point for men who survived hell on earth.

Author’s bio: *Geoffrey W. Roecker is a frequent contributor to Leatherneck and the author of “Leaving Mac Behind: The Lost Marines of Guadalcanal.” His extensive research into missing World War II-era personnel is available online at www.missingmarines.com.*



SGT MARCUS KAUFFMAN, USMC

While most of Iwo’s sculptors are unknown, PFC Alexander C. Schieppati, who served with Signal Company, 4th Marine Division, showed off his handiwork.



TSGT GEORGE B. KRESS, USMC

Above left: This crucifix by an unknown artist was one of many unique monuments found in the aftermath of the fighting on Iwo Jima.

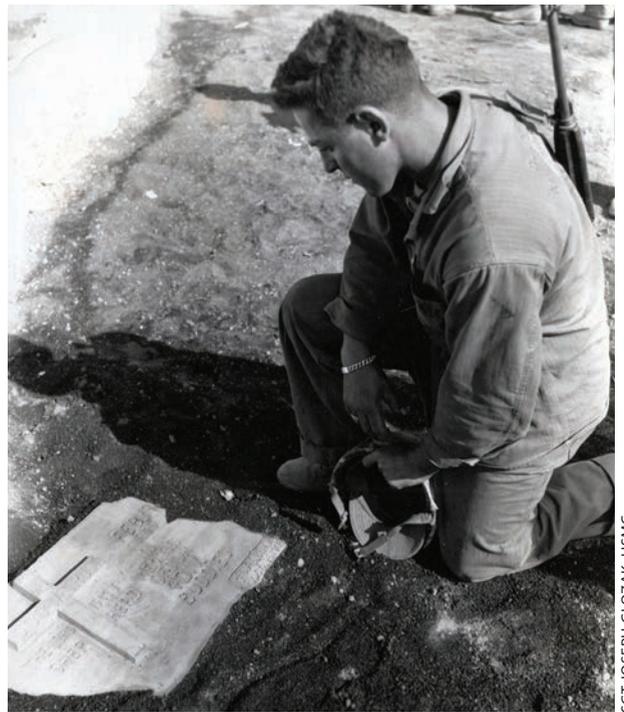


TSGT GEORGE B. KRESS, USMC

Above right: An exceptionally talented sculptor rendered the eagle, globe and anchor in a chunk of sandstone and even included the words “Iwo Jima” in Japanese characters on the bottom right of the sculpture.



SGT NICHOLAS RAGUS, USMC



SGT JOSEPH GLOZAK, USMC

Above left: Nick Ragus photographed these works made by sentimental Marines on March 11, 1945.

Above right: Countless Marines paused by PFC Archie C. Beach's carving on their way to pay respects to their fallen comrades. Beach survived Iwo Jima only to later die in Korea while serving with the 8th Cavalry.

Below: This bullet-stricken boulder provided shelter for a pair of Marines. Another unit had been there and had previously inscribed their names and hometowns on the rock. Most legible names belong to members of Co C, 4th Engineer Battalion; at least one is from Co A, 23rd Marines. (USMC photo)





USMC

Above: Frequently discovered in old fighting positions, many memorials found new homes at Iwo Jima's burial grounds. This sculpture wound up at the 4th Marine Division cemetery.

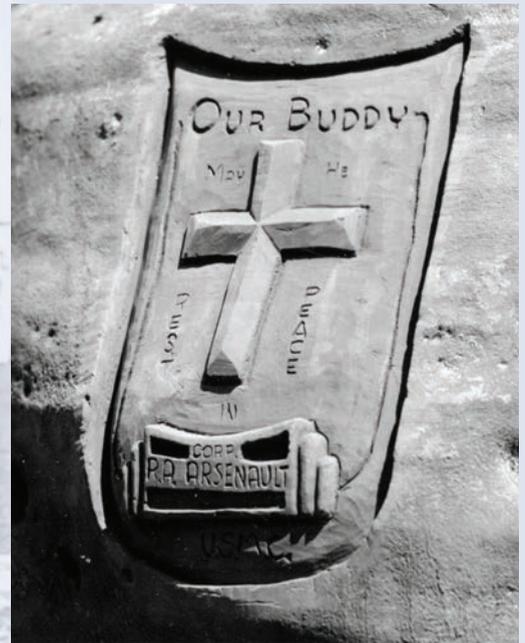


TSGT GEORGE B. KRESS, USMC

Above: Friends of PFC Richard William Whipple from Co K, 3/9 trekked to the 4th Marine Division cemetery to find his grave and place a personal tribute.



PFC Alexander C. Schieppati, far left, finishes a female figurine while other Marines create their carvings. Sgt S.A. Sanosky and PFC Giles R. DeWitt, center, are working on cross-themed motifs; PFC William Plaskon, right, appears to have an ashtray in progress. (Photo by PFC Clyde L. Purser, USMC)



Above: Friends of Cpl Raymond Alyre Arsenault, HQ/2/35, who died in action on March 2, 1945, carved his name into the smooth side of a boulder. (Photo by TSgt George B. Kress, USMC)

Left: PFC Don Fox photographed Iwo Jima from Feb. 19 to Mar. 10, 1945, before being fatally wounded. This plaque stood at the entrance to the 5th Marine Division cemetery; somewhere behind is Fox's marker above Grave No. 1373. (Photo by PFC Frank D. Drdek, USMC)



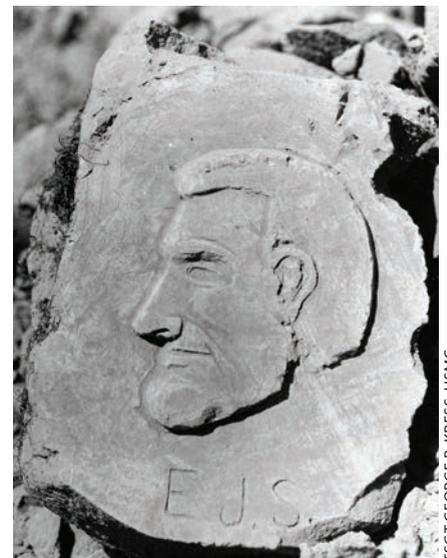
TSGT GEORGE B. KRESS, USMC

This memorial commemorates Sgt James Robinson Newman, 1st JASCO, killed in action on Feb. 23, 1945.



TSGT GEORGE B. KRESS, USMC

An unknown 4th Marine Division artist added his own "ugly face" to a bank of carved graffiti.



TSGT GEORGE B. KRESS, USMC

A portrait of Abraham Lincoln, by "EJS," located near the East Boat Basin was noted by the photographer as one of a few patriotic sculptures found on the island. 🇺🇸



2ndMarDiv Leathernecks Become Naturalized Citizens

1st Battalion, 8th Marines conducted a naturalization ceremony on Dec. 2, 2022, aboard the battleship USS *North Carolina* (BB-55). This ceremony, which granted U.S. citizenship to 18 Marines, was one of the largest ever for a Marine Corps infantry battalion. The new U.S. citizens, who are from 14 different countries spread across five continents, recited their Oath of Allegiance in front of the Honorable Richard E. Myers II, Chief

Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

“Today was a great chance to recognize a significant event in the lives of these young Marines” said LtCol William Kerrigan, the battalion’s commanding officer. “They have already raised their hands and committed to defending this nation, without even being U.S. citizens. Now that they have earned their citizenship, I’m excited to see where it takes them.”

As naturalized citizens, the Marines

will be able to explore more options within the Marine Corps, to include being eligible for other military occupational specialties and commissioning opportunities. In addition to enhanced career opportunities, these Marines will now enjoy all the rights and privileges inherent to American citizens, such as the right to vote, run for public office, petition for permanent residency, and even seek citizenship for their family members.

USMC

Below: Marines from 1st Bn, 8th Marines, stand in formation after a naturalization ceremony aboard USS North Carolina, Dec. 2, 2022. Eighteen Marines from 14 countries and five continents swore the Oath of Allegiance and received their citizenship. This was one of the largest naturalization ceremonies performed by a Marine infantry battalion.



CPL TIMOTHY FOWLER, USMC

Right: Marines from 1st Bn, 8th Marines, raise their right hands during the Oath of Allegiance on Dec. 2, 2022. Naturalization is the process by which U.S. citizenship is granted to a foreign citizen after he or she fulfills the requirements to become a citizen established by Congress in the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.



LCPL NOAH SEAL, USMC



PURPLE HEART AWARDED— On Oct. 11, 2005, Sgt Louis M. Nokes' Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement (MTVR) was struck by an improvised explosive device during a convoy operation in Ramadi, Iraq. Nokes, standing left in the photo taken by his burning vehicle, was pulled from the destroyed MTVR after being knocked unconscious and receiving a traumatic brain injury (TBI). He later began the process to receive his Purple Heart retroactively after MARADMIN 245/11 was published, updating the Marine Corps' criteria on the Purple Heart award to include TBIs. On Dec. 5, 2022, Nokes, now a gunnery sergeant, received his medal at Marine Corps Support Facility New Orleans.



LCPL SAMUEL TABANCAY, USMC



LCPL SAMUEL TABANCAY, USMC



LCPL LESLIE ALCARAZ, USMC

QUICK THINKING SAVED LIVES—Sgt Joseph Howard, a Yonkers, New York native, and mortarman with Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 25th Marines, 4thMarDiv, was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal during a ceremony at McGuire Air Force Base, N.J., on Dec. 9, 2022. The Navy and Marine Corps Medal is the highest noncombatant decoration awarded.



On Dec. 30, 2017, then-LCpl Howard witnessed a car collision involving four vehicles. Two victims were trapped in a vehicle that had flipped eight times over a distance of 300 feet. Howard extracted the unconscious driver as the vehicle filled with smoke while leaking fuel. He then cut the seat belt from another unconscious passenger and removed her as well. As he moved the second victim to safety, the vehicle became enflamed and exploded. He then assessed their injuries and provided life-saving first aid until first responders arrived.

Both victims survived their injuries with Howard credited with saving their lives. The driver of the vehicle, Alex LoRusso, right, was able to attend the award ceremony.

RECRUITER STOPS ROBBERY—SSgt Josue Fragoso, the Marine in charge of Recruiting Sub Station South Bay, was talking to an applicant when he heard glass breaking around 7:30 p.m. on Dec. 20, 2022, near his recruiting office at the Del Amo Fashion Center Mall in Torrance, Calif. Fragoso immediately responded and helped to stop a robbery.

“You can hear when it [the glass] shatters, and I kept hearing it happen,” Fragoso said. “I had this feeling it might be Daniel’s Jewelers getting robbed because they have gotten robbed before. I ran out of the office and went over there.”

SSgt Fragoso and the applicant that he was talking to, Scott Elliott, ran out of the office to see what was happening. While Fragoso and Elliott were assessing what was taking place, they saw four suspects attempting to rob the store. Fragoso and Elliott wasted no time and leapt into action, apprehending and detaining two of the four suspects until Torrance police arrived at the scene.

Torrance Mayor, George Chen, stopped by the recruiting office, Recruiting Sub Station South Bay, on Dec. 20 to personally thank Fragoso and the others involved for their actions.



SSGT IMMANUEL JOHNSON, USMC

JOE DRAGO and the Battle of Okinawa

By Andrew Biggio

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from the book, "The Rifle: Combat Stories from America's Last WW II Veterans, Told through an M1 Garand."

Corporal Joe Drago was involved in some of the most storied action in World War II history, and he just happened to live next door. My whole life, I thought I knew Drago. He was a grouch. Whenever the kids in the neighborhood played baseball in the street and a foul ball landed in his yard, he was always short with us—the stereotypical mean old neighbor that most steer away from. It wasn't until I became a Marine that Drago ever really warmed up to me, and by warmed up I mean that he waved to me occasionally from his porch. Ever the consummate grouch. Now I know that it was more complex than that.

When I interviewed Joe Drago, he was 92 years old and still had plenty of Marine in him.

Our conversation was more than just a history lesson. It was a bond between two veterans, Marine to Marine. Drago began to take me back 74 years—back to Easter Sunday 1945.

The men of the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Marines transferred from a troop transport ship into smaller landing crafts on the northern side of Okinawa, Japan. Okinawa was the last in the chain of islands that led to mainland Japan. It was the closest to the mainland—390 miles away to be exact.

Corporal Joe Drago's commanders and peers warned one another that the Japanese would fight harder and more desperately than they had ever fought. The Marines were close to the Japanese homeland; it was late in the war and U.S. forces were knocking on Japan's front door. Drago's command openly admitted to the young Marines that they expected thousands of casualties on the first day of

Cpl Joe Drago, of West Roxbury, Mass., served with the 6thMarDiv during the Battle of Okinawa.



COURTESY OF ANDREW BIGGIO



PFC SAM BUSHEMI, USMC

A wounded Marine rests his head on his pack while receiving plasma after being wounded during the fight for Okinawa.

the invasion. Even with these facts drilled into his head, Drago wasn't nervous. But those feelings of youthful confidence would quickly disappear.

While Drago and the other Marines stood on the decks of their landing craft, USS *Bunker Hill* (CV-17), a massive aircraft carrier and magnificent symbol of American strength, sailed past. It had been struck by multiple kamikaze planes and was on fire. "Suddenly, we all became nervous," Drago confessed. "It was now real."

The Marines had just traveled two days since their formation on Guadalcanal. No one had bothered to tell them that they were on their way to Okinawa. The young Marines didn't know what was going on, and the sight of the aircraft carrier limping by sowed the first seeds of doubt into the confident ranks.

Drago's transport ship linked up with the 6th Marine Division at a rally point in the Caroline Islands. There they were to join with the Tenth Army and 1st Marine Division for what would be the largest naval invasion of World War II. The invasion was twice as large as the

historic D-Day landings in France.

Drago recalled, "There were thousands of ships and planes as far as the eye could see. It felt like every ship in the world was there."

The time came for the Marines to go below and load up in amtracs—amphibious tractor vehicles that would carry the infantry into battle. The Marines were ordered to deploy from the stern of the amtracs upon reaching the beaches. Leaving from the back of the vehicle was the only way to avoid being shot immediately by machine-gun fire.

Uncontested Landing

They waited for the naval bombardment to cease pounding the beaches and the suspected Japanese positions. When the

bombing stopped, Drago's amphibious vehicle was sent straight for Hagushi Beach in the northwest part of Okinawa. Drago jumped off the rear of the amtrac as it hit the beach and dug its metal tracks into the sand. Drago, a machine gunner with "Item" Company, was in the first wave of Marines to hit the beach. "In other words, I thought I wasn't going to last long," Drago recalled. He carried the tripod of his machine gun and rushed ashore.

And yet, despite the expectations of slaughter, Drago and his fellow Marines took the beach without conflict. There was no enemy, no gunfire, no explosions, and no Japanese. Minor opposition and pop shots were few and far between—nothing like the murderous rain of gunfire

Drago jumped off the rear of the amtrac as it hit the beach and dug its metal tracks into the sand. Drago, a machine gunner with "Item" Company, was in the first wave of Marines to hit the beach. "In other words, I thought I wasn't going to last long."



Drago was awoken by a piercing scream; the Marine next to him was being stabbed to death by a bayonet. As Drago scrambled to defend himself, a flare went up and lit the night sky.

everyone had predicted. The Japanese objective was to lure as much of the American military onto the island as possible, then attack at full force.

Upon taking the beach, Drago and the rest of Item Co were ordered to push forward to their first objective, the Yontan airfield. They reached the airfield within

30 minutes of landing on Okinawa.

Item Co continued to advance at a rapid pace. Just beyond the airfield, the company of 100 Marines faced a deadly ambush. Around dusk, Drago and his fellow Marines engaged the enemy. The riflemen ahead of Drago's squad took cover and dove for the ground as bullets

popped around them. Drago set down his tripod and waited for his assistant gunner to snap the Browning air-cooled machine gun into place.

"I don't even remember breathing," he said.

With a rush of adrenaline, Drago began aiming bursts of machine-gun fire into the tree line and at locations where he thought someone could be shooting from. Suddenly, to his right, he saw enemy combatants running in and out of blast holes



Shortly after landing on Okinawa, Marines begin to advance on Yontan airfield.

the northern part of the island, Drago's company was 12 days ahead of schedule. They began to hit heavy opposition when they started heading back south, assigned to protect the left flank of the 15th Marine Artillery—the artillery unit tasked with providing support and cover fire for the 6thMarDiv.

The 15th Marine Artillery was engaged in a shoot-out with Japanese artillery. The Japanese counterbattery had the 15th Marines zeroed in and was delivering precise, deadly barrages.

"They were being decimated as we watched from a hillside," Drago recalled.

But from that same hillside, Drago's 6th Division could see a small village. Civilians were standing on some of the rooftops, looking out toward the American positions. The Marines inched closer, hoping to gather more information. After creeping forward some more, Co I made a push toward the village. The civilians from the rooftops scattered when the Marines showed up.

Drago and his squad entered a suspicious home that overlooked the 15th Marines' position. As soon as they walked in, they heard noises coming from the building's crawl space.

"We asked—in Japanese—for them to come out," Drago said. After receiving no reply, Drago and his fellow Marines drew their .45-caliber pistols and began to fire through the walls and into the ceiling. One of the Marines climbed onto the roof to find a bleeding Japanese civilian with binoculars and a radio. The man was indeed a spotter, calling out targets for the heavy guns a few miles away. The radio was rushed back to regiment headquarters.

That night the Japanese tried to overrun several American platoons, including Drago's. The Marines were ambushed while they slept in their foxholes. The Japanese had crawled toward their positions with bamboo rods, which had long bayonets attached to them. They thrust the javelin-type weapons into American foxholes, and Drago was awoken by a piercing scream; the Marine next to him was being stabbed to death by a bayonet. As Drago scrambled to defend himself, a flare went up and lit the night sky.

Drago and his assistant machine gunner began to shoot at the Japanese soldiers. Unsure what to do after being spotted, the Japanese started to stand up and move about, only to be gunned down by Drago. Some ran into nearby homes as civilians

and trenches, the aftermath of the naval artillery fire. The enemy ran back and forth between the makeshift trenches, carrying ammo and rifles to different positions.

Drago held the trigger down on his Browning machine gun and watched a running figure in the distance fall face-down. He never confirmed that he had killed the man, but by nightfall Drago knew one thing for sure: he had survived his first day.

The Rest of the Battle

"The first night on Okinawa my assistant gunner and I did not sleep," he started. "Japanese flares were frequent and many of the Marines were trigger-happy, shooting at every noise and movement in front of them."

At dawn they moved out again with the rest of the regiment. The 6th Marines would go left and secure the north end of Okinawa while the U.S. Army hooked right and advanced south. After sweeping

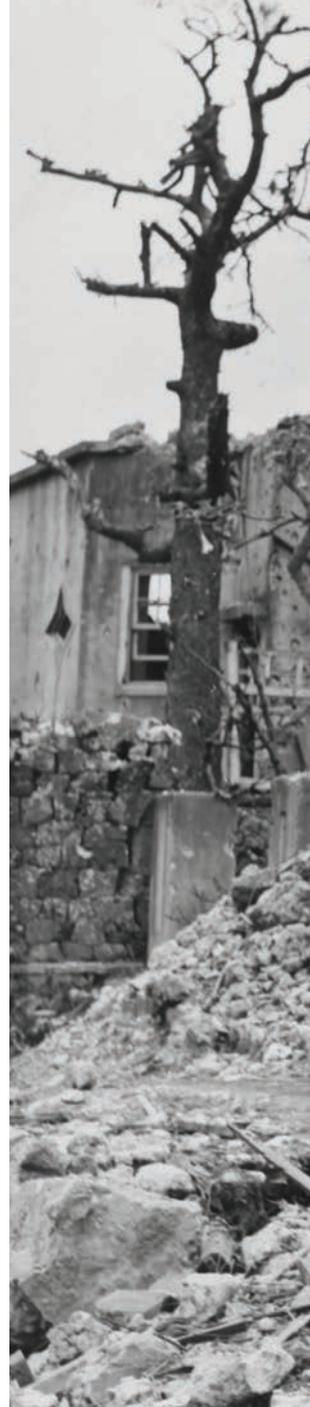
PFCLYAN P. WALKER JR., USMC

Right: A pair of Marines fire at the steeple of a church near Shuri Castle, where a Japanese sniper was hiding. (Photo by PFC John T. Smith, USMC)

Below: Two Marines pick their way through the ruins of Shuri Castle during the fighting on Okinawa.



PFC JOHN T. SMITH, USMC



ran out. In the darkness, all Joe and his assistant gunner could see were shadows. They shot at them, not knowing whether they had hit their marks.

Moving South

Despite these occasional obstacles, the Marines continued their sweep through northern Okinawa at a rapid pace. Things were not going so well for the Army in the south. There, American troops were hit with three times as much opposition. By April 14, 1945, Drago's 6th Division, along with the 22nd Marine Regiment, had pushed south to link up with the Army and the 1stMarDiv along the famed Japanese Shuri Defense Line, a series of complex defense systems which included caves, hills, catacombs, trenches, and machine-gun and artillery emplacements.

Constructed by the Japanese Thirty-Second Army, it had taken years of work to build.

The U.S. Army's Twenty-Seventh Infantry Division had taken heavy losses and was falling back. It wouldn't take long for Company I to get a taste of the brutal action that was happening on the other side of the island.

The Rice Paddy

As Drago's platoon came up on a marshland known as the Asukawa Estuary, they had to cross a man-made footbridge. Just as they made it to the other side, Japanese suicide squads hidden in the grass detonated themselves with high explosives. The explosion penetrated the foundation of the bridge, causing it to collapse. Drago and his platoon were stuck on one side

of the bay, cut off from the rest of the company.

When Drago turned around to watch the bridge fall, mortar fire and small arms fire began to rain down on him. He ran through a rice paddy to find cover, but his left foot got caught in the thick mud.

"I was stuck like a mouse in a mousetrap and trying not to get killed," Drago recalled. "It's scary to take incoming fire, but it's even more frightening to be shot at and not be able to hide."

Unable to move, Drago heard soldiers speaking Japanese through the high grass. He dropped his tripod and removed his .45-cal. pistol. As soon as the voices got closer, he fired the pistol into the tall grass. While attempting to reload, an explosion ripped through the grass, knocking him back. Japanese mortars began to land around



him and the other cut-off Marines. With out an entrenching tool, Drago desperately tried to dig a foxhole with his bayonet, in fear of being hit a second time by shrapnel.

Luckily, the blast had freed both his legs from the mud. He began to crawl through the elephant grass as his squad was able to make a dash to take cover behind a retaining wall, which gave them temporary protection from harassing gunfire.

The enemy fire was coming from a series of sugar mills—blown out buildings that gave snipers and mortar teams a place to hide. Drago and his assistant gunner set up his machine gun and began to strafe the buildings. Their tracers marked the skeleton buildings for the platoon's mortar squad to return fire on

the other side of the estuary. The Marine mortar team began to drop high explosive rounds on the buildings, breaking them down almost completely, killing the snipers and spotters inside.

The rest of the company finally advanced through the neck-high waters. Soon, engineers built a makeshift pontoon bridge to reunite the company of Marines. The Marines won the short battle, but after the smoke cleared, Drago saw that some of his buddies lay dead in the same

rice paddies he had gotten stuck in.

"I give those guys who fought in Vietnam credit," Drago said. "The rice paddies were some of the worst places to get stuck in during a firefight."

With the 1stMarDiv in the middle and the U.S. Army on the far right, the 6thMarDiv took the left side of the Shuri Line. It was a solid plan until the Marine regiments were stopped dead at Sugar Loaf Hill.

Unable to move, Drago heard soldiers speaking Japanese through the high grass. He dropped his tripod and removed his .45-cal. pistol. As soon as the voices got closer, he fired the pistol into the tall grass.

Sugar Loaf

Sugar Loaf was not so much a hill as an elevated mound. The unassuming terrain didn't look like it would pose much of an obstacle to the American forces' southward march. But the Japanese had had their tremendous artillery dialed in on Sugar Loaf. Caves containing both enemy soldiers and civilians who had fled the northern part of Okinawa pockmarked the terrain. Sugar Loaf needed to be secured in order for the American forces to push for the city of Naha, the campaign's objective.

On May 12, Co I advanced toward Sugar Loaf. Gunfire and artillery fire were constant, but not a single Marine could see an enemy soldier. "They were like ghosts. You couldn't even get one of them in your sights," Drago recalled. Sometimes enemy soldiers posed as civilians—a common tactic in urban areas.

There was only one option: everyone had to be considered the enemy. "There was the threat that civilians wanted to kill you," Drago told me. "We killed anything that moved at that point. There wasn't even a second thought of it."

Six heavily armored tanks led the

charge. Artillery fire, mines, and suicide squads descended on the tanks. Infantry protection provided little respite as Marines hugged the ground to avoid exploding shells. Japanese soldiers strapped anti-tank mines to their chests and sprinted towards the tanks. Counter-artillery continued to keep the American grunts ducking and seeking cover. The suicide squads crawled underneath the tanks and then detonated themselves.

"The explosions were so powerful, they would flip the tanks completely over, and the crews would burn inside, still alive," Drago said. Of the six tanks, only one made it through the opening salvos.

The next day, Drago's platoon advanced past the destroyed tanks to the bottom of a ridge. The enemy attack was unrelenting: after making an advance, the Japanese would run back into caves and come out on another side of the hill to shoot again. The tunnels were difficult to figure out, and the American soldiers had to throw

smoke grenades into the caves to see where the fog would come out on the other side.

While stuck in this quagmire, a squad of Marines passed Drago's machine-gun emplacement to summit the hill. He recognized a Captain Marston leading the charge. As the brave Marines ran toward the peak, a friendly naval shell landed in their midst. It exploded and completely disintegrated their bodies. Captain Marston's squad wasn't the only one to be hit by friendly fire. "We don't know how many Marines were killed by American guns, but the number was high enough for us to hold any further advances that day," Drago said.

At night Drago and his machine-gun team slept in their foxhole. As they tried to get some rest, they heard the report: A few foxholes down, two Marines had partnered up to sleep. While one slept, the other got up to retrieve medicine from a foxhole he had dug earlier that day. On

**His body hit the ground like a bag of wet sand.
He could not move, and with a mouth full of dust and rock,
he struggled to breathe. His ears rang—he could only hear a
faint popping sound and distant cries. As his vision went black,
Drago thought he was about to die.**

A team of Marine machine-gunners in action near Sugar Loaf Hill. (Photo by Cpl John J. Curran, USMC)

his way back, his sleeping partner awoke, startled, and fired at what he thought was an enemy soldier sneaking up on his foxhole. Instead, he had just killed his best friend.

In the span of a week, Sugar Loaf Hill exchanged hands between the enemy and the Marines eleven different times. The 22nd Marine Regiment suffered so many casualties that entire companies had to be reorganized into platoon-sized elements, which typically consisted of 30 to 40 men. Thousands of American servicemembers suffered from fatigue and had been wounded.

Wounded in Action

May 21, 1945, was Drago's last day on Sugar Loaf Hill. Since the other Marines seemed to be gaining more territory, Drago and his assistant gunner broke down their machine gun and headed out with them.

When they got to their new position, Drago went to set up his gun. Before he could reset the tripod, he heard the distant whistle of another artillery bombardment. An enemy shell hit, and with nowhere to take cover, Drago was launched into the air by the explosion. His body hit the ground like a bag of wet sand. He could not move, and with a mouth full of dust and rock, he struggled to breathe. His ears rang—he could only hear a faint popping sound and distant cries. As his vision went black, Drago thought he was about to die.

When he woke up, he was already on a stretcher. Two American soldiers were carrying him across the field. "How or why the Army got to me, I don't know," Drago said. "I had no idea what happened to the other Marines in my squad. I didn't think anyone was left alive."

But as the soldiers carried Drago away, more Japanese artillery rounds impacted the area. The Army medics fled, leaving Drago in the middle of the battlefield. "They dropped me and ran for cover," Drago told me. "I never felt so vulnerable and scared in all my life."

Drago lay helpless on the stretcher as shells landed around him, burying him in dirt and rock. "The next time I woke I was inside a tent in a field hospital. The doctors informed me I had internal bleeding and other broken blood vessels. I was puking and pissing blood."

After days of relentless fighting, the Division took Sugar Loaf Hill. Sixteen hundred Marines were killed in action.

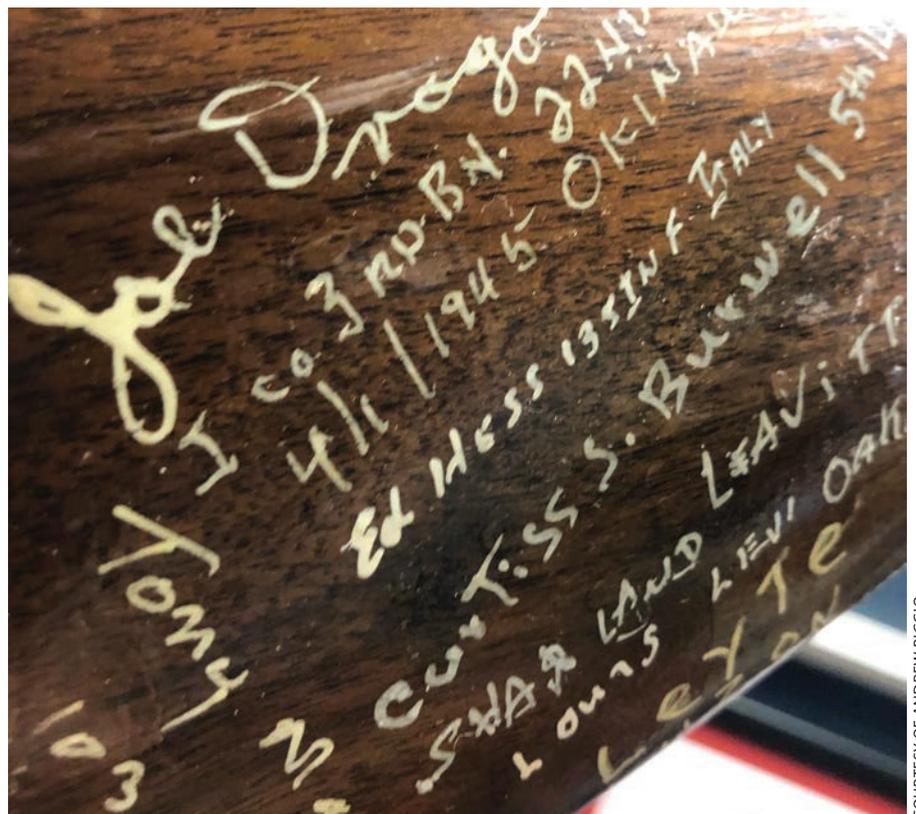
Drago was one of the thousands of Marines wounded and evacuated from the battle. His buddy, Corporal James Day, earned the Medal of Honor for his actions during that battle.



COURTESY OF ANDREW BIGGIO

Above: Author Andrew Biggio stands next to the M1 Garand rifle that has been signed by 300 veterans, 64 of them, Marines. Biggio dedicated his book "The Rifle" to the men who gave their lives in WW II, "whose names we may never know."

Below: A close-up view Joe Drago's signature on Biggio's M1 Garand. Drago was the first to sign it, sparking Biggio's interest in collecting other veterans' signatures on his rifle and telling their stories in his book, "The Rifle."



COURTESY OF ANDREW BIGGIO

There he watched the news broadcast announcing that atomic bombs had been dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima and that the Japanese had surrendered. "Everyone in the entire hospital celebrated," Drago recalled fondly.

However, the American position wasn't yet secured. The U.S. Navy was still being attacked by Japanese kamikaze pilots. Flak and other ammunition was pumped into the sky to strike enemy aircraft. However, shrapnel and bullets would rain down on the field hospitals along the beach, wounding patients as they lay on their stretchers.

"Marines were earning their second Purple Hearts simply lying in hospital beds," Drago told me. "No place was safe."

Drago drifted in and out of consciousness and was eventually placed aboard a hospital ship heading back to Guam and then California.

Returning Home

Drago finished his healing process at the Chelsea Naval Hospital in his home state of Massachusetts. There he

watched the news broadcast announcing that atomic bombs had been dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima and that the Japanese had surrendered.

"Everyone in the entire hospital celebrated," Drago recalled fondly. "They waved their crutches and spun circles in their wheelchairs. It was the happiest day alive."

Nearly every service member in the Chelsea Naval Hospital put their uniforms on and hitchhiked into downtown Boston. Everyone wanted to be in the center of town for the celebrations.

Life moved on. In 1947, the government gave families who had lost loved ones in the war the option to have them exhumed. Their bodies would be dug up from the foreign battlefields on which they were killed and shipped back to the United States at Uncle Sam's expense. Some families decided to let their sons lie where

they were buried, undisturbed. Others wanted them back home.

Drago found out that the family of Michael Pietrusiewicz, one of his fallen comrades, had decided to have his remains shipped home. Drago escorted Michael's body back to Methuen, Mass., and met the entire family. As they celebrated their loss in Polish tradition, unsettling memories of the war came back to Drago. The experience made him uncomfortable enough to leave and hitchhike back home to Boston.

Nearly 75 years later, Joe Drago still finds it difficult to talk about the war. The 6thMarDiv left the best part of itself on Okinawa, sacrificing men's bodies, minds, and souls to capture the strategic territory. In this last battle of World War II, nearly 23,000 Japanese soldiers were killed. A couple thousand were taken prisoner. Drago lost 12 good friends on the island. They won the last battle thanks to great sacrifice.

Author's bio: Andrew Biggio is a Marine veteran who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is currently serving as a Massachusetts police officer and is the president of the nonprofit organization New England's Wounded Veterans. "The Rifle" is his first book.

Are You Ready?



Mike & Kay Ross
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President Biden Authorizes DOD Spending Increase

President Joe Biden signed the Fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act into law, allotting \$816.7 billion to the Defense Department. The act means a 4.6 percent pay raise for military and civilian members of the department and includes \$45 billion more than originally requested to counter the effects of inflation and to accelerate implementation of the National Defense Strategy. The act also authorizes \$30.3 billion for national security programs in the Department of Energy and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board and \$378 million for other defense-related activities.

Although inflation has been dropping, the act authorizes \$12.6 billion for inflation impacts on purchases. It also funds \$3.8 billion more to account for inflation in military construction. It is a testament to the size of the agency that the act authorizes \$2.5 billion for inflation impacts on DOD fuel purchases.

One of the more contentious items in the act is requiring the Secretary of Defense to rescind the mandate that members of the Armed Forces must be vaccinated against COVID-19.

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III ordered the mandate on Aug. 24, 2021. Some 98 percent of active-duty servicemembers and 96 percent of the total force have been vaccinated. Since April 2022, only two servicemembers have died from COVID-19. Austin had previously argued that the mandate is necessary to protect military readiness, and he has been clear in his support for maintaining it.

On Jan. 10, however, in keeping with the direction of the NDAA, he rescinded the mandate.

On the personnel side, the act authorizes additional funding to address the effects of inflation on compensation. It also puts in place language allowing more servicemembers to qualify for the basic needs allowance by increasing the eligibility threshold and allowance size from 130 percent of the federal poverty line to 150 percent. The act authorizes the defense secretary to increase this benefit to 200 percent of the poverty line when appropriate.

The act increases bonuses and special pay for servicemembers in qualifying career fields. The act also looks to give recruiters a tool to revive and extend temporary authority for targeted recruitment incentives.

The act expands the scope of financial reimbursement related to spouse re-licensing and business costs arising from a permanent change of station. The act also calls for a pilot program to reimburse military families for certain childcare



LISA FERDINANDO, DOD

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III provides testimony during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the Defense Department's Fiscal Year 2023 budget request in April 2022.

costs related to a permanent change of station.

There are several changes in the act regarding housing. The act extends the authority to adjust the basic allowance for housing in high-cost areas. It encourages DOD to coordinate efforts to address housing shortages. The act also makes the assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations and environment the department's chief housing officer.

There were no surprises on active-duty end strength with the Army set at 452,000; the Navy at 354,000; the Air Force at 325,344; the Marine Corps set at 177,000 and the Space Force at 8,600.

Jim Garamone, DOD News

BAH Rates Increased by Average of 12.1 Percent For 2023

The Defense Department released the basic allowance for housing (BAH) rates for 2023 in December of last year. Those rates rose, on average, by 12.1 percent, said the Pentagon press secretary.

"The significant increase in average BAH rates is reflective of the unique market conditions experienced across many locations nationwide over the past year," said Air Force Brigadier General Pat Ryder. "The department is committed to the preservation of a compensation and benefits structure that provides members with an adequate standard of living to sustain a trained, experienced and ready force now and in the future."

The BAH increase was not unexpected. In a memo dated Sept. 22, 2022, Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III outlined an array of efforts to address the needs of married servicemembers and their families as well as single service members.

"The Department of Defense has a sacred obligation to take care of our servicemembers and families," Austin wrote in the memo. "Doing so is a national security imperative. Our military families provide the strong foundation for our force, and we owe them our full support."

Part of that effort was a review of the prospective 2023 BAH rates to ensure they reflect unusual fluctuations in the housing market. Additionally, in the 28 areas DOD identified as having a more than 20 percent spike in rental housing costs above BAH, the secretary directed automatic increases in BAH, which took place in October 2022. According to a DOD release, the October rate increases were temporary and expired Dec. 31, 2022. Those who had received the temporary rate increases switched over to the new BAH rates in the new year.

In addition to increased BAH rates to help military families, the Defense Department is also working on other initiatives, including efforts to make military moves less onerous, make securing childcare less difficult, and expand military spouse employment.

C. Todd Lopez, DOD News



GUERRILLA

By Lt Weldon James, USMC

Somewhere out in the Pacific is a young Marine who need not be there. He could have been home for Christmas, the next, and the next—if he wanted to. But he chose to go back.

This was no surprise to those Marines who knew Reid Carlos Chamberlain, 25, of El Cajon, Calif. Nor to his mother, Mrs. Ettie Chamberlain, a frail, semi-invalid whose pride in the Marine Corps is matched only by her pride for her son. It had to be that way.

Mrs. Chamberlain has had considerable correspondence with the Corps ever since 1938, when young Reid, at the end of his fourth year of high school, first enlisted. She and her husband, Donald Chamberlain, fully approved. But in April 1939, Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain had to ask for their son's release. The father was already in the throes of his last illness; the mother was not strong enough to work.

Young Reid, with serious blue eyes, wavy brown hair and a tanned ruddiness fresh from San Diego, got an honorable discharge to become the family breadwinner. He was still determined to make the Marine Corps his career (he enlisted in the Reserve the day of his discharge), but for the moment, other duties were more pressing. He went to trade school and became a riveter in an aircraft plant.

He was doing better than all right, and the aircraft company, reading the signs of the times, sought to get him discharged from the Reserve. But this required an application from Private First Class Chamberlain, and he never submitted it. On June 26, 1941, he returned to active duty.

On Aug. 2 of that fateful year, he voluntarily extended his four-year enlistment to five years. Later that month he sailed from Mare Island to serve with the 4th Marines in Shanghai.

He wrote his widowed mother faithfully once a week describing the exotic life of the Paris of the Orient and the near-clashes with the arrogant Japanese. He could say little about the growing conviction among the Marines there that

Chamberlain helped the guerrillas smuggle guns and ammunition.

war was just around the corner. When the Marines pulled out of Shanghai and his letters began arriving from Marine Barracks, Navy Yard, Cavite, P.I., Mrs. Chamberlain was not too surprised.

Things happened rapidly then. The last letter she received from the Philippines was dated Nov. 26, 1941. There were no more letters after Pearl Harbor. The Marine Corps sent a sympathetic note, promising news when it could get it. In February, at last, a cheerful note from PFC Chamberlain himself. Then the surrender of Corregidor. The Commandant wrote, with deep regret, that Reid would be carried as “missing in action.”

Long, long months later, the widow back home in El Cajon got the terrible news from Headquarters Marine Corps beginning: “Deeply regret to inform you cablegram from International Red Cross Tokyo Japan reports that your son ... now reported to have died in the Philippines ... Your son’s splendid record in the service nobly gave his life in the performance of his duty.”

The grieving, ailing mother wrote back with simple eloquence:

“I am more than grateful,” she wrote to the Commandant, “for your words of comfort ... I am sure he did all he could to the last ... But it’s hard to believe he’s gone ... yet I am sure he would rather have gone in battle than to have been a prisoner ... In his last letter to me, written Feb. 4, 1942, he said he had some close calls but nothing to worry about, and he would keep pitching ... I do not regret that I let him go. It was his wish. I was and am proud of him. He was fine and unassuming. I know of no better way to go than in the service of our country...”

These words were written in March 1943. How right she was in her judgment of her son’s unwillingness to be taken prisoner, Mrs. Chamberlain was not to know for long months to come. She settled Reid’s affairs and mourned his death.

Back in the Philippines, young Chamberlain was very much alive, beginning an epic series of adventures seldom equaled in the history of the Corps.

At war’s outbreak he was serving with Company C, 1st Separate Marine Battalion, on Cavite. In those first hot days, the Marines fought back with rifle fire to aid the ack-ack guns in repelling the heavy Japanese air onslaught. Three days after Pearl Harbor, Reid sustained his first injury—a cracked right ear drum due to heavy detonations while the Americans were repelling Japanese planes bombing the Navy Yard.

Then the Marines and the Sailors were pulled out of Cavite to Bataan to guard that peninsula stronghold until the armies of Wainwright and MacArthur could fight their way to that locale for their last stand.

The Japanese knew that battle plan as well as the Americans. The handful of Marines and the shipless and plane-less Sailors, rapidly converted into Marine-trained infantry battalions, had a tough and little-publicized assignment from the very beginning. The Japanese launched attack after attack from the ocean and the bay, seeking to capture Bataan before the Army could reach it in force. They were repelled and repelled again and again.

It was in one of these actions that Reid was wounded. Fighting as an infantryman with Company M, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, he stopped a Japanese machine-gun slug with his right forearm. A corpsman treated the wound, and Reid remained in action.

Chamberlain got off Corregidor, spent 23 days adrift at sea, became an Army officer, smuggled guns to guerrillas, and finally returned to the United States along with the men he had helped to escape from a Japanese prison camp.

Eleven days later, on March 10, 1941, he was promoted to corporal.

Before Bataan fell to the Japanese, the Marines moved again, this time to Corregidor. The gallant stand there was almost finished when, on the morning of May 6, 1942, news of the impending surrender was announced.

Corporal Chamberlain was in no mood to surrender. He knew of a motor launch he could use, and, with several Marine and Army companions, he did a disappearing act beneath the very noses of the conquering Japanese.

They had to avoid Japanese shipping, Japanese planes, and Japanese land patrols. They held their breath, and they made it to a point where friendly Filipinos guided them and hid them. How they got from island to island, where and how they served with various guerrilla bands, in those last long months of 1942, still may not be told. But the familiar pattern of substantial inroads on the enemy was continued.

Near the end of the year, they acquired a 45-foot diesel-engined launch and set out for the coast of China. Reid had

heard much about the effective work of the Chinese guerrillas while serving in Shanghai and had Chinese friends. He was bent on joining the Chinese guerrillas and “working his way” up to Chungking and the American forces.

Their engine failed some 70 miles out at sea. A makeshift sail proved too small to be effective, and they drifted for 28 bitter days before landing again in the Philippines. On this heartbreaking trip there were 10 desperate men—five Filipinos and five Americans. Dodging Japanese planes and ships was a minor part of their bleak voyage. They suffered an acute shortage of water and had no food the last few days.

Weak, but not despondent, they made an unwanted Philippine shore again. The party split up to ensure greater security. Fed and cared for by friendly natives, Corporal Chamberlain regained his strength. With another American

and two Filipinos he finally acquired a native sailboat and this time set sail for Australia. The corporal was still in there, pitching.

They reached another island “outside the Philippines,” and what he heard caused Chamberlain to change his mind. He bade his friends, “Godspeed.” For himself, he was going back. To date, he had been only with small, scarcely organized bands of guerrillas. Now he had word of an organization on a really large scale, and he saw genuine opportunity ahead.

The friendly inter-islanders sailed him back to the Philippines, and as promised, delivered him to a tough young colonel in the Philippine Army. The Filipino, in turn, took him to another leader, a colonel in the U.S. Army, to whom Corporal Chamberlain reported “for duty.”

Colonel “X” sized up the slender, hard-eyed young Marine then asked him a few questions. Then he gave him a “guerrilla-field” commission on the spot. It was now Second Lieutenant Reid C. Chamberlain, and he became an aide to Colonel “X.”

The colonel had a great organization—

soldiers, sailors, Marines, Filipinos, both the famous Scouts and the ill-trained but enthusiastic and effective volunteers. The Japanese held the Philippines, but the underground was swallowing many a Japanese soldier in most mysterious fashion. Just how this organization functioned may not be told but published accounts of guerrilla warfare elsewhere in the Philippines give an idea—the ambush of Japanese patrols in the jungle, the sudden raid on ammunition dumps and supply stocks, the quiet bow-and-arrow death of any Japanese soldier who strayed too far from his garrison stronghold, the invaluable communication with MacArthur’s forces and the Navy “outside.”

One of Chamberlain’s exploits can be told. The colonel sent him “outside the Philippines” on a smuggling job. Wherever it was he went, the doughty lieutenant returned with badly needed guns, gasoline, some powder, some lead—good enough material for the behind-the-lines jungle “munitions factories” equipping those guerrillas who as yet had not captured better stuff from the Japanese.

And whatever else he did, Lieutenant Chamberlain was OK by the colonel, who advanced him to first lieutenant some eight months after his commissioning. The colonel also sent back a report that was to do young Chamberlain no harm.

After a full two years in the Philippines, First Lieutenant Reid C. Chamberlain, USA, finally came back to America. With him came other Army, Marine, Navy personnel, some of whom, with the guerrillas’ aid, had escaped from Japanese prison camps. Certain members of the organization stayed on.

The Japanese held the Philippines, but the underground was swallowing many a Japanese soldier in most mysterious fashion. Just how this organization functioned may not be told but published accounts of guerrilla warfare elsewhere in the Philippines give an idea.

Army Lieutenant Chamberlain was ready to get back into the Marine Corps again. Despite several bouts of malaria, his iron-man constitution had stood him in good stead; he was again a rugged 150-pounder; the doctors said he was in reasonably good shape, and he thought he could make it.

In Washington, the paper confusion was great, but the lieutenant waded through it. The Marines gave him a necessarily tardy honorable discharge, retroactive to the day before he accepted the Army commission (Jan. 15, 1943). The Army permitted him to resign his commission and, in turn, gave him an honorable discharge.

Then the hardy youth re-enlisted in the Marine Corps. He was given immediately his old rating of corporal and appointment to the officer candidates’ class at Quantico.

First, however, Chamberlain had less vigorous business to attend to. Lieutenant General Alexander A. Vandegrift, Commandant of the Marine Corps, presented him with the Distinguished Service Cross awarded by General MacArthur for “extraordinary heroism in action,” and arranged a rare thing in the service—a 60-day furlough.

A few months earlier, the Marine Corps, on the basis of “official and

reliable” information, had been able to reveal to Mrs. Chamberlain that her son was indeed alive, but had to enjoin her to joyous secrecy. Not even the insurance company could be told until Reid’s actual arrival home!

Sixty days with his mother and old friends in El Cajon were not enough, Corporal Chamberlain found, to adjust himself to the bright new world of America after his dark two years abroad. He went to Quantico, he had he spent only four days at that rigorous, fast-moving school, when he applied for transfer.

The corporal thought that if he could serve at San Diego and see more of his family and friends for “a few months,” he might complete his adjustment.

It was an unusual request, but no more unusual than the corporal. His commanding officer, noting that Corporal Chamberlain was “extremely anxious for combat duty,” approved. And it turned out that an old friend from Bataan, Colonel (now Brigadier General) W.T. Clement, was the commandant of Marine Corps Schools, Quantico. Colonel Clement “strongly recommended” that the corporal’s request be granted.

Without prejudice to his record, Corporal Chamberlain was discharged from



candidates' class. He got his transfer to Base Guard Company, MCB, San Diego. His orders stipulated he could not be transferred again without the express approval of Marine Corps Headquarters. He had a good stateside job. He was "stuck for the duration."

It was March 22, 1944, when he left Quantico for San Diego. Soon, by direction of the Secretary of the Navy, he was presented the Purple Heart with Gold Star for those wounds of 1942. (The Marine Corps had already ruled that his mother could keep the Purple Heart sent her after the official announcement of his "death.")

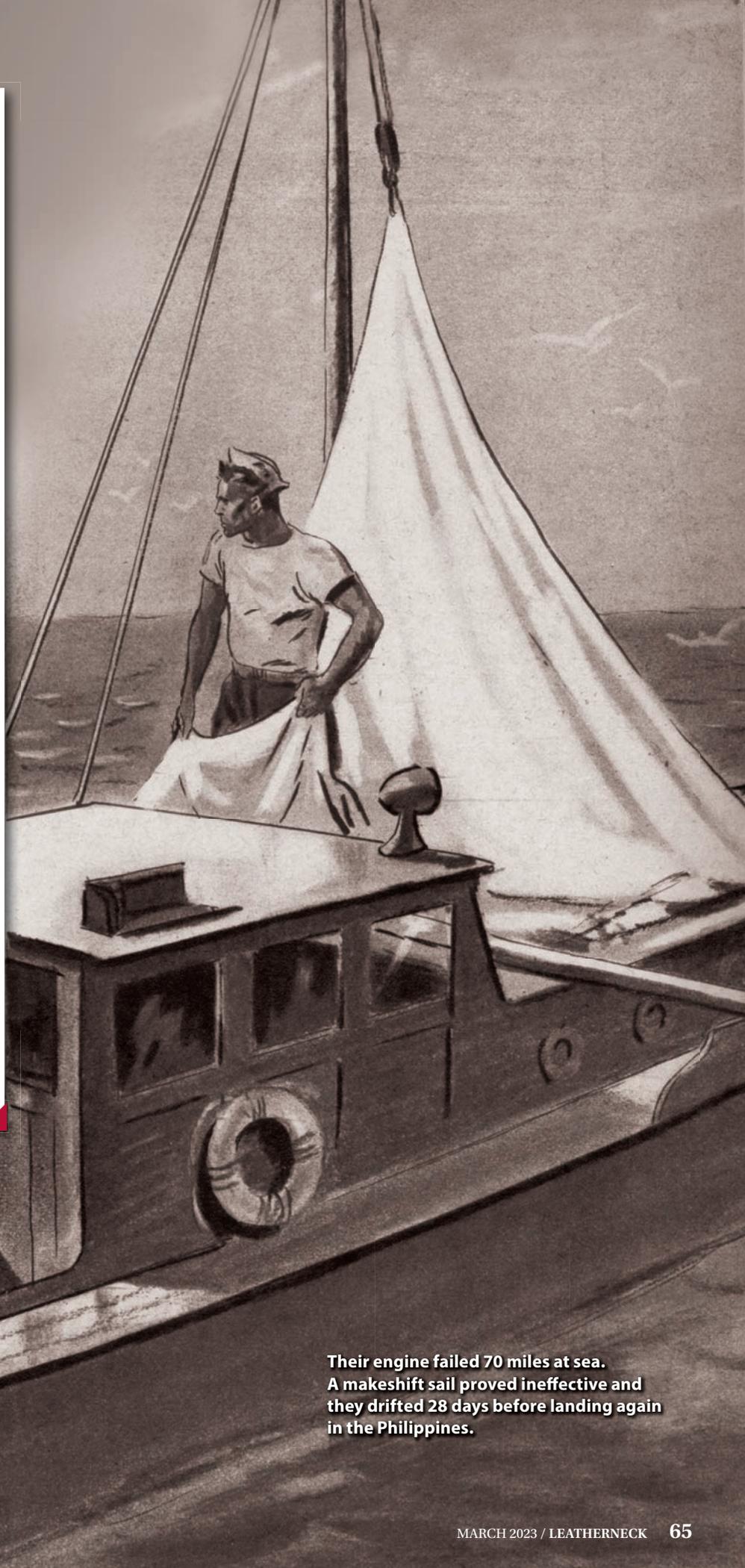
By his own terms, the corporal had before him several months for "re-adjustment." But two weeks of his safe job in San Diego were enough. On April 14, he wrote to the Commandant: "I respectfully request that I be assigned to duty in a combat area ..."

The corporal insisted that his malaria had been quiet for a long time. His commanding officer, approving, wrote that the Californian, among other assets, had "a valuable temperament for combat."

General Vandegrift agreed. Chamberlain, by this time a sergeant of two weeks' standing, was on his way to fight the Japanese again.

Mrs. Chamberlain wasn't surprised. She'd known all along it'd have to be that way.

Editor's note: Sgt Reid C. Chamberlain was killed in action on Iwo Jima on March 1, 1945, only two months after this article was originally published in Leatherneck. His remains are listed as unaccounted for. 



Their engine failed 70 miles at sea. A makeshift sail proved ineffective and they drifted 28 days before landing again in the Philippines.

In Memoriam

Compiled by Nancy S. Lichtman

SSgt Lorraine M. “Connie” Allord, 102, of Madison, Wis. She was an air traffic controller at MCAS Cherry Point, N.C., from 1943-1945.

Cpl Robert A. Barrett, 76, of Monroe, Ohio. He enlisted and served in Vietnam. He later had a career with the Postal Service, retiring as a postmaster.

Laurel (Abrams) Beaty, 100, of Cumming, Ga. She was doing artwork for movie sets in Hollywood when WW II began. She enlisted and served until the war ended.

Wilfred P. “Willie” Borley, 91, of Green Bay, Wis. He was a Marine who served from 1951-1953.

Waldon M. Brashear, 100, of Iowa, La. He joined the Civilian Conservation Corps when he was 16 and enlisted in the Marine Corps in June 1941. He served in the Pacific during WW II including on Guadalcanal and Tarawa. After the war, he worked in oil fields and later was a truck driver.

Eugene “Gene” Brown, 75, of Townsend, Del. He served in Vietnam and was wounded three times. He had a career as an engineer with DuPont. He was a member of the Purple Heart Association, the VFW and the American Legion.

William “Bill” Bruegge, 59, of Elsmere, Ky. He served in the Marine Corps and later was an aircraft mechanic with Endeavor Airlines at the Greater Cincinnati International Airport.

D.R. Caldwell, 86, of Altamont, Ill. He served from 1957-1959. He was a member of the MCL.

Cpl Norman C. Champagne Sr., 90, of North Syracuse, N.Y. He served during the Korean War. After the war he had a career in business. He was a member of the VFW and the Korean War Veterans Association.

Rodney E. Croft, 76, of East Barnard, Vt. He enlisted after his 1965 graduation from high school. He was assigned to VMO-6 and served two tours in Vietnam.

Anthony “Tony” DeFusco, 101, of Methuen, Mass. He fought in the Marshall Islands with 4thMarDiv during WW II and was wounded. After the war, he worked as a postal clerk for 35 years.

Brent G. DeLay, 77, of Fairfield, Ohio. He enlisted in 1963 after his high school graduation. His four years of service included a tour in Vietnam.

Danny D. Dunn, 72, of Germantown, Ohio. He served in Vietnam and was

wounded. He later had a career as an aircraft machinist for Aeronca Aircraft. He was a member of AMVETS.

George W. Epps, 92, of Kingsport, Tenn. He served in the Marine Corps and later was a member of the American Legion. He was a volunteer at a VA hospital.

SSgt Dale Garside, 72, Chinquapin, N.C. He enlisted in 1968 and served for 10 years. During a tour in Vietnam, he was assigned to 1st Radio Bn. He later served with 2nd Radio Bn.

Richard J. Gay, 97, of Allouez, Wis. He enlisted in 1943 and was assigned to the 4thMarDiv in the Pacific. He saw action during the Battle of Iwo Jima.

E.H. Gleason, 94, of Shreveport, La. He was a reservist who was working as a sports reporter for *The Shreveport Times* when he was called to active duty in 1950.

Assigned to 1stMarDiv, he saw action at the Chosin Reservoir. After the war, he completed OCS and was commissioned in 1951. He was a company commander for 1st Recruit Training Bn at MCRD Parris Island.

Richard M. Gomoluch, 82, of Hobart, Wis. He enlisted in 1958 and served four years.

Charles L. Gubish, 103, of Bethlehem, Pa. He served in the Pacific during WW II and saw action on Iwo Jima. His awards include a Purple Heart.

Sgt Walter C. Hazlitt Jr., 96, of Stony Brook, N.Y. He enlisted after his graduation from high school and served in the Pacific during WW II and later in China. After the war, he earned a bachelor’s degree and worked for the water district in his hometown, becoming the executive director of the Suffolk County Water Authority. He was an active volunteer in the community and spent 60 years with the Stony Brook Fire Department, serving as the chief and on the district Board of Fire Commissioners.

Gary Heckendorn, 85, of Woodville, Wis. He served eight years in the Marine Corps.

John V. Imondi, 97, of North Providence, R.I. He served in the Pacific during WW II and was severely wounded after an enemy attack on his ship. After the war he had a career with the Postal Service.

Bob Kotter, 74, of Gloucester City, N.J. He was a Marine who served in Vietnam.

Marjorie Z. Marshman, 100, of

Madison, Wis. She enlisted in 1943 and served until 1946. After the war, she worked for the Wisconsin Public Welfare Department and later the UW School of Nursing. Throughout her life she was active with volunteer work. She was a member of the MCA, American Legion, MCL, Women Marines Association, and VFW Auxiliary. She was a member of the Madison Veterans Firing Squad, an honor guard that performs rifle volleys at the funerals of veterans.

Sgt John P. “Jack” McGreevey, 93, of Carteret, N.J. In the closing days of WW II, he served in Guam, China and Japan. He was called back to active duty during the Korean War and served as a DI. He later had a career in business and in the interstate commerce industry. He also was an adjunct professor at Rutgers University.

Bryan S. Miller, 68, of Green Bay, Wis. He enlisted in 1972 and served in Washington, D.C.

SSgt John C. Merchant, 72, of Oak Lawn, Ill. He enlisted after his high school graduation and served as an infantry Marine. He later had a career as an electrician.

Herb Monk, 72, of Spokane, Wash. He enlisted in 1968 and served in Vietnam. He was wounded by shrapnel from a booby trap after being in country only nine days. He returned to his unit and was again hit by shrapnel and sustained multiple fragmentation wounds two months later. He returned home and was discharged. He earned a degree in forestry and had a career as a forester.

Sgt James E. “Moon” Mooneyham, 77, of Marseilles, Ill. He enlisted after his high school graduation and was assigned to Bttry C, 2nd LAAM Bn in Vietnam. He had a career as a steamfitter/pipefitter and was a member of the VFW and the American Legion.

Lyle E. Moore, 76, of Hamilton, Ohio. After his 1964 graduation from high school, he enlisted. He served a tour in Vietnam as an infantry Marine with 1st Bn, 9th Marines. In 1973 he began a 27-year career as a fire fighter, retiring as fire chief. He was a member of the DAV.

Jack A. Morrow, 97, of Pittsburgh, Pa. He served during WW II as a radar operator in the Pacific theater.

MGySgt Bobby J. Moses, 80, of Raleigh, N.C. He served 30 years in the Marine Corps and then worked in the EMS field for another 25 years.

SSgt Gratia C. “Gay” (Howard) Ouellette, 99, of Minneapolis, Minn. She was attending secretarial college when Pearl Harbor was bombed. She was among the first women to enlist in the Marine Corps during WW II. She met her future husband, a fellow Marine, while she was serving at Camp Lejeune. After the war, she used the GI bill to attend college, earning a bachelor’s degree in political science. She later had a career as the executive secretary for the dean of the College of Pharmacy at the University of Minnesota.

Capt Kenneth B. Poteet, 78, of Louisville, Ky. He was a Marine who served in Vietnam. His awards include the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart.

MSgt Esequiel B. “Bernie” Rangel, 76, in Tampa, Fla. He served a total of 30 years in the Marine Corps and the Army.

Sgt Winnifreid Reineking, 99, of New Berlin, Wis. She enlisted after WW II began and was stationed at Camp Pendleton.

Thurl B. Roberson, 97, of Wise, Va. He served in the Pacific theater during WW II. He was an enlisted aircrew Marine and completed numerous combat missions. He later became an FAA inspector and mechanic.

Sgt Michael R. Robbins, 72, in Garland, Utah. In 1969 he was assigned

to “Lima” Btry, 4th Bn, 12th Marines, 3rdMarDiv at Camp Hague, Okinawa, Japan.

Patrick A. Rodgers, 81, of Orange County, Calif. He served for three years before beginning a 35-year career in law enforcement.

Claude Atmar Rogers, 97, of Venice, Fla. He enlisted during WW II and served in the Pacific. He saw action during the Battle of Okinawa. After the war, he worked in electronics and later had a long career with the Postal Service.

Don E. Somerville, 76, of San Clemente, Calif. He was a field radio operator who served a tour in Vietnam. He later was assigned to the MarDet on board USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34). After his discharge, he completed law school and opened his own practice.

LCpl Tyler M. Steffins, 34, of Everett, Wash. He enlisted in 2007 and served four years. He was an infantry Marine assigned to Echo Co, 2/7. He later became a police officer in Edmonds, Wash.

Daniel L. Valdez, 72, in Anchorage, Alaska. He served from 1967-1972 and was an amphibian tractor mechanic.

Michael A. Vogt, 74, of Salem, Ore. He enlisted and served five years before beginning a career in the construction industry.

Capt Daniel M. Walsh III, 80, of

Springfield, Mass. He was commissioned in 1964 after graduation from Providence College. He was stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif., and Camp Schwab, Okinawa, before serving a tour in Vietnam as a platoon commander for Lima Co, 3rd Bn, 1stMarDiv. He was wounded when his platoon was ambushed during Operation Utah and more than 20 years later, in 1998, he was awarded the Bronze Star with combat “V” for his actions during the engagement with the enemy.

Throughout his life he was an advocate for veterans’ rights and was named the Veteran of the Year by the Springfield Veterans’ Activities Committee.

John P. Webster, 95, of Syracuse, N.Y. During WW II he was stationed in London.

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

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rank and field grade, I believe. The cover he is wearing, however, is *not* the Field Grade Officers cover. I love that uniform and couldn't wait to get my new cover when I got promoted to major. At least it wasn't for my period of service.

Jim E. Davis
Birmingham, Ala.

Thoughts on the Camp Lejeune Justice Act

We have seen all the information on TV. Any Marine and their families or personnel working at Camp Lejeune during the years of August 1953 through December 1987, may have drunk or showered in toxic water from the leaking underground storage tanks. You must have been at Camp Lejeune not less than 30 days.

Toxins in the water included benzene, which is used in the manufacturing of plastics and pesticides. Two wells that contained trichloroethylene (TCE), perchloroethylene (PCE), and vinyl chloride were capped in 1985. There were at least 70 other dangerous chemicals; some were 200 times greater than the

safety standard that have been noted in the toxic water.

The Camp Lejeune Justice Act (CLJA) passed the House of Representatives on March 2, 2022, and passed in the Senate on Jun. 18, 2022. The Act became law on Aug. 10, 2022; there is a two-year window for persons to apply under the Act. It is estimated that one million people may have been affected by the toxic waters at Camp Lejeune. Some of the cancers that have shown up include bladder, breast, kidney, liver and esophageal. Some people have even been diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.

Many law firms (about 15 that I have seen) have advertised on TV, offering their services for people who have contracted various cancers from toxic waters. This is a good thing. It gives all affected people an opportunity for potential compensation. They can also contact the Veterans Service Office (VSO).

Personally, I was at Camp Lejeune from January to March of 1965. In the 80th year of my life, I have no symptoms of any of the various cancers. Let's hope all Marines and their families are doing well and staying safe.

Palmer C. Sweet
USMC, 1964-1970
North Garden, Va.

John Sanchez writes in the January edition of Sound Off that the water at Camp Lejeune has been "addressed." Yes, addressed is the key word. Solved, no. The Camp Lejeune Justice Act is not just. Why should anyone, especially Marines, have to file a lawsuit for any service-connected illness, injury, or disability?

And why the 30-day minimum? 29 days and one is not subject to injury? I can say from experience that anyone at Camp Lejeune in summer drinks more water than others there at other times. This should not stand. Everyone should be eligible the same as others in the act.

Leo Bloschock
Colombia, S.C.

Feel like sounding off? Address your letter to: Sound Off, *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134, or send an email to: leatherneck@mca-marines.org. Due to the heavy volume, we cannot answer every letter received. Do not send original photographs, as we cannot guarantee their return. All letters must be signed, and emails must contain complete names and postal mailing addresses. Anonymous letters will not be published.—Editor 🐼

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Reunions

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

• **11th Marine Regiment, OIF (20th anniversary)**, Mar. 31-Apr. 1, Camp Pendleton, Ca. Contact Casey Harsh, casey.harsh@gmail.com. Facebook group: The Cannon Cockers of OIF-1 (20-Year Reunion 20 3G roup).

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

• **TBS, Co D, 4-73**, June 15-18, Arlington, Va. Contact Col Bill Anderson, USMCR (Ret), (540) 850-

4213, binche57@yahoo.com, or Col Bob Donaghue, USMCR (Ret), (617) 840-067, ip350haven@comcast.net.

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

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

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

• **East Coast Drill Instructor's Association**, May 4-7, Parris Island, S.C., Contact Kenneth Miller, (828) 499-0224, usmcpidi@charter.net, for more info visit www.parrisislanddi.org.

• **Don E. Davis MCAA Squadron**,

March 23-26, MCAS Beaufort officers' club. Contact Robert McCutcheon, mguns@me.com, or Gale Rodgers, rogers77oki@yahoo.com.

• **1st Marine Division Assn.**, Aug. 13-20, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact June Cormier, (760) 763-3268, June.oldbreed@fmda.us.

• **Holy Loch, all personnel, all eras**, May 10-14, Dunoon Scotland. Contact Gerry Haight, CharlieHaight@yahoo.com.

Mail Call

• Veteran Marine Michael J. Hagle is looking to hear from **Col Michael Chene, USMC (Ret); LtCol J.M. Schultz, USMC (Ret); and former 1stLt Michael Bryant**, who were in Fox Co, 2nd Recruit Bn, MCRD San Diego, 1989.

• Veteran Marine William Napier, 10716 Gail Ct., Saint Louis, Mo., 63123, is looking to hear from **Joseph Zingale who served in E/2/3, May 1966, in Vietnam.**

Wanted

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

• Doug Stevens, yellowboat663@yahoo.com, is looking for a **Platoon 261, Parris Island, July 1968 graduation book.**

• Bob Jeziorowski, (716) 601-8226, mwff2124@gmail.com, is looking for **pictures of Platoons 58-63 from June 14-21, MCRD Parris Island, 1948.**

Sales, Trades and Giveaways

• GySgt Ray Harris, Ray@HonorFirst.com, has a **Platoon 341, MCRD San Diego graduation book, 1956-1959**, available to any member of the platoon who is willing to pay the shipping cost. Contact for more information.

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



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Saved Round

By Sam Lichtman



DIGGING POTATOES—In these 1917 photographs, Brigadier General George Barnett, the 12th Commandant of the Marine Corps, fires the Colt-Browning M1895 “potato digger” machine gun on a Marine Corps rifle range in Winthrop, Md.

Born in the small town of Lancaster, Wis., on Dec. 9, 1859, George Barnett graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1881 with the first class to send officers to the Marine Corps. He was transferred to the Marine Corps on July 1, 1883, after two years at sea as a cadet midshipman. Barnett served on several ships as a lieutenant, including the protected cruiser USS *New Orleans* (CL-22) to which he was assigned after the Spanish-American War broke out in April of 1898. With Barnett aboard, the ship formed part of the blockade of Santiago, Cuba, while future President Theodore Roosevelt and his Rough Riders captured San Juan Hill on the city’s eastern side.

Like George Barnett, the Colt-Browning M1895 first saw combat in the Spanish-American War, notably with Marines in the capture of Guantanamo. Invented by legendary arms designer John Browning and manufactured by Colt, the M1895 was truly revolutionary—it was one of the first successful machine guns ever produced and became the first machine gun to be adopted by the U.S. military. The weapon earned the moniker “potato digger” for its unique gas-driven operating lever, which pivoted down from the barrel at high speed each time the action cycled, approximately seven times each second. Due to its weight of more than 35 pounds, the accurate and reliable M1895 was fired from a tripod, horse-drawn carriage (seen here), or vehicle mount.



By the time these photographs were taken in 1917, the Colt-Browning M1895 had long been relegated to training use and replaced by more modern designs in Marine Corps service. The Lewis light machine gun, fired prone by the Marine in the larger photograph at the top of the page, was slated to replace it but was purchased almost exclusively by foreign militaries.

Unlike the obsolescent M1895, George Barnett continued to serve with distinction through the early 20th century, including overseeing the Corps’ expansion to more than 75,000 enlisted men and more than 3,000 officers during his tenure as Commandant from 1914 to 1920. During this time, he also successfully lobbied to send a Marine regiment on the first U.S. military convoy to embattled Europe, continuing the Corps’ proud tradition of being “first to fight.”

Barnett served in the military for more than 42 years, retiring on his 64th birthday in 1923 at the rank of major general. He died in 1930 at the age of 70. 🇺🇸



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