

FEBRUARY 2020

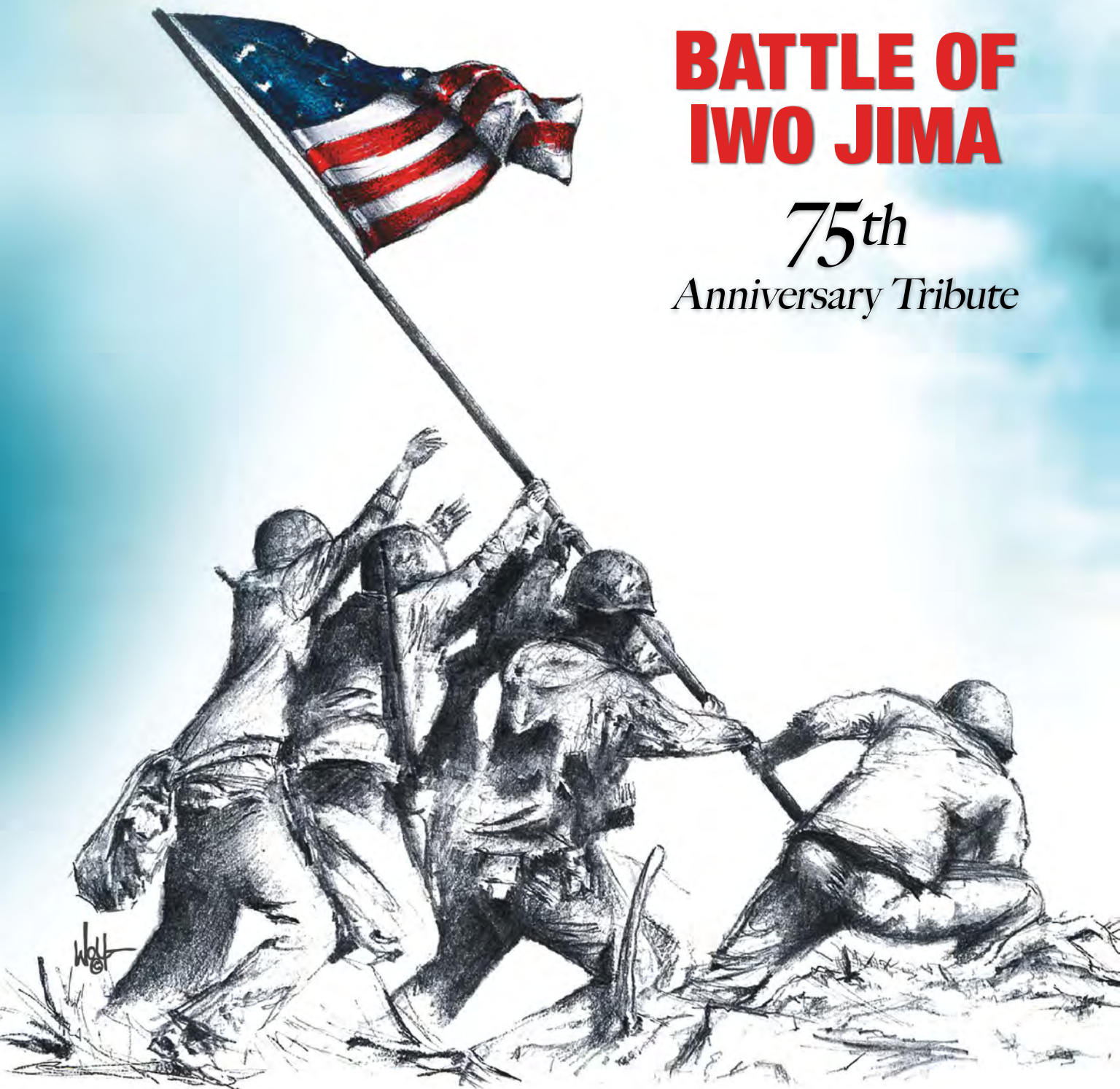
MAGAZINE OF THE MARINES

# Leatherneck

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## BATTLE OF IWO JIMA

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*By Ashley Calingo* The Marine Corps' UTVs are undergoing upgrades designed to improve the safety and performance of the vehicles to include high-clearance control arms, new run-flat tires, floorboard protection, a road march kit, a clutch improvement kit and environmental protection cover.

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*By Sgt Bill Miller, USMC* This article from the *Leatherneck* archives details the efforts of 2nd Bn, 23rd Marines to take Mount Suribachi and raise the first flag at its summit.

### 50 One of 52: Marine Sgt Rocky Sickmann, Held Hostage in Iran, Recalls 444 Days in Captivity

*By Sara W. Bock* Forty years after the U.S. Embassy in Tehran was seized by protestors on Nov. 4, 1979—marking the beginning of the Iran Hostage Crisis—a Marine Security Guard shares his story with *Leatherneck*.

### 58 Snake Tales: Cobra Pilots of HMLA-269 Over An Nasiriyah, Iraq

*By Suzanne Pool-Camp* In March 2003, 3rd MAF was tasked with providing air support for Task Force Tarawa in the capture of the bridges over the Euphrates River and Saddam Canal. Three years after the fight, four veterans of the battle give their account of the harrowing moments.

**COVER:** Feb. 22, 1945, marks the 75th anniversary of the beginning of the Battle of Iwo Jima. GySgt Charles Wolf, USMC (Ret) created *Leatherneck's* February cover, which depicts the second flag raising on Mount Suribachi. See the two articles from the *Leatherneck* archives about the battle on pages 30 and 36. Visit Gunny Wolf's website [www.sempertoons.com](http://www.sempertoons.com) to view more of his art. Copies of the cover may be obtained by sending \$2 (for mailing costs) to *Leatherneck* Magazine, P.O. Box 1775, Quantico, VA 22134-0775.



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# From the Editor's Desk



SSGT LOUIS R. LOWERY, USMC

**The black sands of Iwo Jima are clearly evident in this photo of wounded Marines taken by the legendary Marine combat correspondent Lou Lowery in February 1945. The photo is one of hundreds Lowery took during the Battle of Iwo Jima, the most famous of which was his photo of the first flag raising on Mount Suribachi.**

A small number of *Leatherneck* readers were alive when newspapers trumpeted the reports of a ferocious battle on a tiny island in the Pacific in early 1945. An even smaller number can actually remember hearing of the battle and its tremendous cost. Yet every Marine today knows the name of the battle and its place in the pantheon of Marine Corps history—Iwo Jima. The name alone evokes the famous quote by Admiral Chester E. Nimitz, “Uncommon valor was a common virtue.” While many Americans think only of Joe Rosenthal’s iconic photo of the flag raising on Mount Suribachi when they hear of Iwo Jima, Marines know the battle was so much more.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Iwo Jima which began on Feb. 22, 1945. Much has been written about the iconic battle which has been referred to as one of the Corps’ cornerstone battles, and rightfully so. As General Graves Erskine said at the dedication of the 3rd Marine Division cemetery on the island, “Victory was never in doubt. Its cost was. What was in doubt, in all our minds, was whether there would be any of us left to dedicate our cemetery at the end or whether the last Marine would die knocking out the last Japanese gunner.”

The numbers from the battle are simply staggering. The 36 days of combat resulted in the single worst losses of any battle in Marine Corps history. Almost 25,000 Marines and Navy Sailors and officers were killed or wounded in the fighting. Military historian Dr. Norman Cooper made a staggering comparison in “Closing In: Marines in the Seizure of Iwo Jima” by Colonel Joseph H. Alexander, USMC (Ret), when he noted, “Nearly seven hundred Americans gave their lives for every square mile.” *Seven hundred per square mile*. It was the only battle in the Pacific in which Marine casualties exceeded the number of Japanese

killed—the Japanese lost about 22,000 men defending the island.

*Leatherneck* has probably covered Iwo Jima more than any other battle with several articles in the past few years on the Corps’ efforts to confirm the identities of the Marines who raised the flags on Mount Suribachi, including the most recent one in our January issue. The scope of the battle provides countless stories of heroism, sacrifice and dogged determination—enough that our readers never grow weary of hearing tales from Iwo Jima or the other islands Marines secured in the island-hopping campaigns of World War II.

We have two articles in this issue to commemorate the anniversary. Both were published within weeks of the battle’s conclusion in our May 1945 issue. Written by a Coast Guardsman, the first article, “D-Day on Iwo Jima,” provides a unique look at the challenges the Seabees and others faced in setting up beach parties to get ammunition, equipment and personnel off the beach and into the fight throughout the island. “Hot Rock: The Fight for Mount Suribachi” details the efforts of 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marines to take Mount Suribachi and raise the first flag atop the mountain. We hope these articles serve as a fitting tribute to the men who erased Gen Erskine’s doubts and, despite the overwhelming cost, were ready to press the fight on to Okinawa and do whatever was needed to end the war.

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

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## Letter of the Month

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

I appreciated the letter from David Epps in the December 2019 issue. Like him, I am a Vietnam-era veteran, although I was in the Army, and I also do not wear anything that would make anyone think I was in the war. However, I do wear Marine caps, shirts, and T-shirts in honor of my son, Lance Corporal Ryan Winslow, KIA in Iraq, April 15, 2006. After he was killed, the "Howlin' Mad" Smith Detachment of the Marine Corps League in Birmingham, Ala., adopted my wife, daughter, and me into the family. A very special bond developed between us, and my wife and I became Life Associate Members and were very active with the detachment until we moved to another state last year. We will always be part of this family. The Marines from the local Reserve Unit have also been extremely good to us.

While wearing something Marine-related, I am often asked when I served or get a "Semper Fi." It gives me the opportunity to tell about Ryan, to help keep his memory alive. I always make it clear that he was the Marine, not I. I don't look for sympathy; I am very proud of his being a Marine, and my wife and I have come to love the Marine Corps. Other Marine Gold Star Families that we know act and feel the same. The Corps has our support until we stop breathing. God bless the USMC!

George Winslow  
Mount Pleasant, S.C.

• *I think I speak for all Marines when I say that you and your family have more than earned the right to wear anything Marine Corps related especially if it results in someone learning about your son. My sincere condolences on the loss of Ryan, and thank you to you and your wife for raising such a fine young man willing to serve his country in a time of war. I'm not surprised that the "Howlin' Mad" Smith Detachment has taken such good care of your family—the leathernecks of the Marine Corps League truly understand the meaning of Semper Fidelis.—Editor*

## Almost a Marine

I sympathize with David Epps' letter, "Almost a Marine," in the December 2019 issue, concerning the young fellow wearing a Marine boot camp T-shirt. A couple years ago, my wife and I stopped for breakfast at a favorite place. Spotting a youth at the counter with a T-shirt that read, "Pain is Weakness Leaving the Body—United States Marines," I walked up, put a hand on his shoulder, and said, "Semper Fi. Where did you serve, Marine?" He said, "Oh, I'm not a Marine, I just liked the shirt." I said, "Oh," turned away, and went back to our table.

The waitress, a friend, came over and said, "Well, that was a short conversation."

The proper response to someone who says, "I almost joined the Marines," is, "In that case, I almost respect you."

SSgt Robert A. Hall  
Madison, Wis.



COURTESY OF MSGT ANTONIO ROSA, USMC (RET)

**MSgt Antonio Rosa, USMC (Ret), right, ran into a WW II Marine while visiting Harpers Ferry, W.Va.**

## WW II Marine Made My Day

While hiking at Harper's Ferry, W.Va., I met a World War II Marine who was part of the Marine forces that landed on Okinawa. He was with his family, and when he saw me, he let out a loud, "Semper Fi, Marine!" We wound up shooting the breeze like long lost buddies. I could see a sparkle in his eyes and I would like to think I made his day. He sure made mine!

MSgt Antonio Rosa, USMC (Ret)  
Frederick, Md.

## You Might be a Jarhead if ...

The Sea Story in the December 2019 issue "You Might be a Jarhead if ..." is a great entry. It is so true—I am still doing a lot of the listed items. When I talk to any

of my Marine buddies or Marines I meet, we talk about these events. *Leatherneck* is my best motivational and educational reading. This particular section would make an outstanding monthly article. I believe a lot of Marines would be happy to send you some of their personal events for you to publish each month. These are just a few things I still encounter:

I still have some of my basic uniform issue.

I call cadence when I walk.

I still say, "Oorah" two or three times very loud when I achieve something.

When I hear "The Marines' Hymn," I get fired up and stand up with pride.

I enjoy any Marine movie.

Yes, military training should count as college credits because Marine training is the best. Marine training is clear, objective and rewarding.

Yes, I still have my dog tags.

A few key words: field day, field meet, field jacket, foot prints, chow line, snap in and begin, and parade rest. I can go on and on and so can a lot of other Marines. Keep up the outstanding work!

I have omitted my name to remain objective because the article is impressive.

One Marine Sergeant  
Quantico, Va.

## Outstanding October Issue

The photo of the six generals in the October 2019 issue is worthy of display in any Marine's den and the accompanying article really brought it to life. It was a great photo accompanied by a great piece of writing. On a less serious note it would be an interesting entry for Crazy Captions.

The frustration felt by General James N. Mattis over Fallujah must have reminded him of the similar anguish felt by Presley O'Bannon at Tripoli.

The article, "Carrier Casualty," on the sinking of USS *Princeton*, was quite graphic but what leaped out at me was the photo on page 27 of Sergeant J.A. Melby calmly reading a copy of *Leatherneck*. I hope that the ship was not under attack at the time.

Those three alone made this an outstanding issue, but then, they are all outstanding issues.

Bob Gannon  
Rochester, N.H.

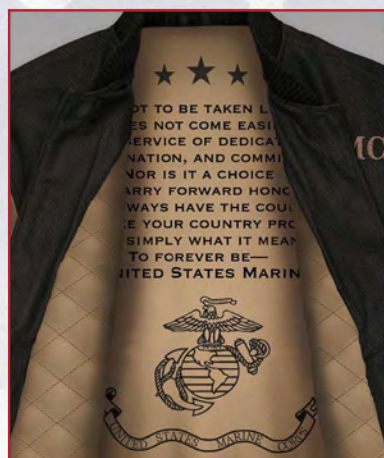
• *Thank you for your kind words about the October issue. The Leatherneck staff works hard each month to put out*

# REMEMBERING THE BATTLE OF IWO JIMA

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*a world-class magazine and it's always nice to hear from our readers that they appreciate our efforts.—Editor*

## China Marine Association No Longer Exists

On March 1, 2019, the China Marine Association ceased to exist, closing a colorful chapter in the annals of the United States Marine Corps.

In 1989, the China Marine Association was founded by Marine veterans who, at a point in their Marine Corps service, served on mainland China. Some early members served during the tumultuous times in the 1930s in Shanghai and Peiping prior to World War II. In 1940 Marines based in China were sent to the Philippines in anticipation of war with Japan. During the war Marines in special OPS-SACO were active in China behind enemy lines training and equipping Chinese forces fighting the Japanese in guerrilla warfare.

Marines arrived back in China in 1945 where they accepted the surrender of all Japanese forces and assisted in sending thousands of Japanese soldiers and Japanese civilians back to their homeland. The last China Marine left China in July 1949 at the time Communist forces took control of the country.

Since its beginning, the China Marine Association attracted 2,500 Marines who served at one time in China. For those Marines, China duty is an experience they will relish all the days of his life.

In the March 2019 final issue of *China Marine Scuttlebutt*, major events Marines faced in China over the last 100 years, including the famed Boxer Rebellion, are noted. Marines first landed on China in 1819, 100 years ago. Also included in the final issue of *Scuttlebutt* is a listing of 44 Medal of Honor recipients and the names of former Marine Commandants who served in China.

At age 91, I'm proud to say I'm a China Marine.

Leslie F. "Buzz" Marcus  
Mancelona, Mich.

## Leatherneck Had Lasting Effect

I attended Zanesville High School from 1964 to 1965. I visited the school library quite frequently. I remember that we were fortunate to receive a monthly issue of *Leatherneck* and I read it each month cover to cover. I must say that the articles were very informative in explaining what the Corps was about. They covered past history and current events. I attribute my enlisting into the Corps because of the motivation that I received from *Leatherneck*.

I spent 30 years in the Corps. I now help the local Marine recruiters to make their

monthly mission. I take my past issues out to the Marine office for the recruiters and the poolees to read and enjoy.

Thank you *Leatherneck* for all the educating that you provide and for my time in our beloved Corps.

MSgt Dick Bowers, USMC (Ret)  
Zanesville, Ohio

## Iwo's Heroes

My father-in-law, Corporal Robert Joseph McCarthy, 1st Bn, 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division, survived the Battle of Iwo Jima and has expressed his thoughts in this poem. It is appropriate that the sacrifice of so many for their country be remembered through the writing of one who experienced the reality. Having served in the Marine Corps myself, I have nothing but respect for those who have honorably given of themselves for their country.

'Twas little o'er a year ago,  
We landed on Namur.  
And in between we took Saipan,  
Then Tinian's rugged shore.

Now once again we're landing,  
This time on Iwo's beach.  
The fighting's tough, terrain is rough,  
Shells whine and rockets screech.

The odds are set against us,  
From the thousand caves and more.  
They cut us down and push us 'round,  
But we bounce right back for more.

The 4th and 5th and then the 3rd,  
Kept hacking at the Japanese,  
'Til every cave became a grave,  
Like mouths with bloody lips.

Now we've got them in the corner,  
And they're making their last stand.  
We give them hell with shot and shell,  
Then close in like a band.

Today the fight is over,  
And our heroes laid to rest.  
Remember them! They died like men,  
Each of them gave his best.

Those of us, who saw it through,  
Can thank God that we did.  
When we fought 'round this rugged ground,

We walked on Hell's own lid.  
Cpl David Lewis Murphy  
Clarkdale, Ariz.

## HOG Continues to Support Toys for Tots

In reference to the December 2019 article, "San Diego Motorcycle Group Rides to Benefit Toys for Tots," in San Diego, the 6th Annual Toys for Tots

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Event was held on Nov. 24, 2019, the third consecutive year of the El Cajon Harley Owners Group (El Cajon HOG) and Del Mar Thoroughbred Club (DMTC) partnership. Due to the leadership and extraordinary efforts of retired Marine Mike Harris (El Cajon HOG) and Sheryl Kerstiens (DMTC), the event donated 3,962 toys, more than triple the 2018 record results, and \$18,500, more than the 2018 record results, to Toys for Tots.

Col J.S. Anderson, USMC (Ret)  
La Mesa, Calif.

### Belt Buckle Inquiry

I am writing in response to the inquiry by Steve Grady in the November 2019 issue. I, too, have such a buckle given to me by my grandfather, Major Joseph F. LaBonte, USMCR, (Ret), who served on active duty from the late 1920s through the end of World War II, later retiring from the reserve. During the late 1930s and into the initial years of WW II, he served on several ships including USS *San Francisco* and USS *Portland* in the Pacific theater, primarily as the first sergeant of the onboard Marine detachment. Although the crew was afforded limited downtime while underway, he did spend time in the respective engineering departments, specifically the machine shop.

The buckle in the photo, and presumably the one in Mr. Grady's possession, was handmade from a Navy issue buckle, a halved .30-caliber round, and right side collar emblem. He explained that the right side emblem was used because it is not the official emblem and the buckle was merely



COURTESY OF MAJ RANDALL W. LOCKE  
USMCR (RET)

**Maj Randall W. Locke, USMCR (Ret), was given this belt buckle by his grandfather, Maj Joseph F. LaBonte, USMCR (Ret).**

a novelty item. It was not issued nor was it intended to be worn with the uniform.

The buckle in Mr. Grady's possession appears to be in excellent condition. It should be noted those deployed Marines worked with the limited resources available, namely less-than-serviceable buckles and insignia. Much of the detail has been worn away from the eagle, globe, and anchor on my buckle, and the buckle itself would never pass inspection. Still, it

stands as a piece of Marine Corps history.

Maj Randall W. Locke, USMCR (Ret)  
Jackson, Mich.

In response to the letter from Steve Grady in the November 2019 issue, I found a buckle just like the one shown at a swap meet in Florida some years ago. I have no idea if the buckle was issued or not. All I can say is mine was well-worn.

GySgt Edwin Martin, USMC (Ret)  
1968 to 1991  
Fredericksburg, Va.

### White Belt or Blue Belt?

On page 43 of the November 2019 *Leatherneck* is a picture of Marines in historical uniforms. What caught my eye in that picture was the Marine in the 1948 to 1950 winter dress blues with blue cover. When I wore that uniform in 1949, we never saw a white belt worn with it. We always wore a blue belt with brass buckle.

SSgt Jack Bell  
USMC, 1949-1953  
North Chesterfield, Va.

• We checked with the director of the United States Marine Corps Historical Company, GySgt Tom Williams, USMC (Ret), for clarification. The uniform you saw in the picture on page 43 of our

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November 2019 issue was not the same uniform you would have worn in 1949. It is a set of 1929 enlisted dress blues which would have been worn with a white belt as one of the alternatives (there was no blue cloth belt for enlisted uniforms at that time). GySgt Williams pointed out the lack of pockets and the gun pointer rate on the blouse in the picture, which is also consistent with the 1929 uniform of a seagoing Marine. The use of specialty rates on Marine uniforms started to be phased out by the end of World War II. Pockets, along with a blue cloth belt, would be added to the enlisted dress blue uniform with the introduction of the 1947 uniform regulations.—Editor

### My Dad, the Marine

My dad, First Sergeant Harry O. Blake Jr., USMC (Ret), turned 90 on November 19, 2019. Recently we held an early birthday celebration at which I presented him with a book of letters and well wishes from his family and friends. He said each one touched his heart deeply. He told me, so I'm following orders, to submit my letter to *Leatherneck*. He thinks it reflects the feelings of many military children.

"You on the drill field; I thought you were 10 feet tall and ruled the world.

When you collapsed with pneumonia and they took you to the hospital. I was scared to death.

You returning from Lebanon; that was the slowest moving ship ever. When I finally saw you I thought my heart would burst.

You leaving for Vietnam; your blouse was drenched in tears from all of us. When you walked up the stairs to the plane, I feared I'd never see you again. I was so scared.

Listening to your voices on those reel to reel tapes and hearing you say, 'Now kids, you leave the room, the rest is for your mom.' I always wondered what you said to her that we couldn't hear.

You returning from Vietnam; I heard you call grandma. When you said, 'Hi mom' I heard you begin to cry. I'd never known you to cry before.

The look on your face when we saw Momma in the emergency room on the day the Lord took her home.

Moving my whole life; always, even after Momma, you were always moving.

The trip to Hawaii; oh, what sweet, fun memories we made. Seeing places where you had been as a young man was priceless.

The sound of you and Momma scream—  
[continued on page 68]

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# In Every Clime and Place

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

## CAMP PENDLETON, CALIF.

### Viper Storm: Validating the Capabilities of the AH-1Z

In a powerful demonstration of aviation lethality, 12 AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters proved their worth during a complex training event that combined sea-based principles with expeditionary operations and live fire engagements. The exercise, known as Viper Storm, took place in Southern California, Dec. 11, 2019. The attack helicopters flew from two separate locations—one on the coast and one inland—and struck simulated enemy targets representing peer and near-peer threats capable of denying naval and joint forces the freedom of navigation essential to maritime control and enhancing operational-level flexibility.

Beginning at Marine Corps Air Station Camp Pendleton, eight Vipers took to the sea to hunt for maritime threats that could negatively impact simulated sea lanes. After being passed new targeting information, they rerouted to link up with four additional Vipers and engage multiple land targets before rehearsing rearming at an expeditionary forward arming and refueling point. Once rearmed, they

again took to the sky to engage targets and support follow-on ground operations.

“Viper Storm was an opportunity to validate the modern maritime capabilities of the AH-1Z Viper to joint commanders within the Department of Defense, United States partners and allies, and potential peer adversaries,” said Colonel William Bartolomea, the commanding officer of Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 39, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. “We were highlighting the maritime component of the Viper, the ability to go from ship to shore in a large element and address peer threats.”

Bartolomea’s comments underscore a shift in the Marine Corps’ focus back to the maritime domain. General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, released guidance in 2019 directing the Marine Corps be trained and equipped as a naval expeditionary force in readiness and prepared to operate inside actively contested maritime spaces in support of fleet operations.

Viper Storm showcased the AH-1Z’s vital role in supporting Gen Berger’s directions.

The exercise was designed to showcase the AH-1Z Viper’s capabilities and how

the aircraft could operate in support of the Navy, flying from the sea and striking simulated threats that the Navy and joint force are likely to face. In the week leading up to the exercise, Gen Berger published an editorial in “War on the Rocks,” which stated, “For the first time in a generation, sea control is no longer the unquestioned prerogative of the United States.” Viper Storm demonstrated that the AH-1Z Viper is a uniquely qualified platform capable of enhancing sea control.

These exercises are essential for MAG-39 to maintain readiness and training standards. The 12 Vipers employed AGM-114 Hellfire air-to-ground and AIM-9 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, emphasizing the versatility the Viper provides. With larger stub wings than its AH-1W Super Cobra predecessor, the Viper can carry a combination of up to two Sidewinders, 16 Joint Air-to-Ground Missiles (JAGM) or Hellfires, auxiliary fuel tanks, and up to 76 rockets with various fusing options, including the newest Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) LASER-guided rockets. This allows the platform to be tailored to any mission whether sea, land or air related.



Four AH-1Z Vipers with HMLA-469 take flight along the California coast while participating in Exercise Viper Storm at MCAS Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 11, 2019.

PFC VICTOR JACKSON, USMC



CPL KENNY GOMEZ, USMC

**Above: Marines with SPMAGTF–CR–AF conduct MOUT training during Raider Fury at Camp de Carpiagne, France, Dec. 10, 2019.**

**Right: As part of Raider Fury, SPMAGTF–CR–AF Marines participated in a live-fire range at Camp de Carpiagne, France, Dec. 10, 2019.**



CPL KENNY GOMEZ, USMC



CPL KENNY GOMEZ, USMC

**Left: A Marine shoots an M240 at Camp de Carpiagne, France, Dec. 10, 2019. The SPMAGTF is deployed to conduct crisis response and theater security operations as well as participate in bilateral training exercises like Raider Fury.**

The AH-1Z Viper is more lethal and survivable than its predecessor in large part because of the modernized ordnance, sensory and communication equipment. For example, it can carry the JAGM, which will replace the Hellfire missile. The JAGM is a multi-sensor, aviation-launched, precision-guided munition for use against high-value land and naval targets. It provides precision point and fire-and-forget targeting day or night, regardless of weather.

The AH-1Z's glass cockpit provides pilots with superior situational awareness, and the upgraded Target Sight System has an incredible range that enables the Viper to detect and engage targets from distances not previously possible for Marine attack helicopters. Modern technology enables the Viper to cue naval and joint kill chains, which is a capability the Commandant stated was important to complicate an adversary's decision-making calculus. It is because of those technological advancements that Bartolomea, who grew up listening to his father's stories of Cobra missions, stated, "This Viper is not your dad's Cobra."

Viper Storm also focused on expeditionary operations, to include its ability to refuel and rearm from a temporary location and then conduct assaults deeper inland. The Navy and Marine Corps are working to master operational concepts in support of fleet-level warfare with the intent of providing fleet commanders the option of persistently posturing naval expeditionary forces forward in key areas as a complement to the seagoing elements

of the fleet. Viper Storm demonstrated this capability and showed that MAG-39 can conduct distributed operations in austere environments in support of maritime and joint objectives.

"Posturing Vipers forward is what the aircraft was made to do," said Bartolomea. "We are an attack helicopter, killing enemy forces is what we do for a living. We don't provide a whole lot of value on the ground unless we are refueling, re-arming and getting back to the air to engage the enemy or facilitate other joint weapons platforms and systems."

Viper Storm would not have been possible without the diligent efforts of the Marines and Sailors of MAG-39 who "Fix, Fly and Fight" the AH-1Z every day. It is thanks to their efforts that MAG-39 was able to seamlessly conduct this large-scale strike with AH-1Z Vipers and continues to stand ready to support Marine, naval expeditionary and joint forces across the globe.

In conducting strikes from the sea and temporary bases inside a simulated peer adversary's threat ring, MAG-39 demonstrated its commitment to remaining ready to enhance sea control and remain at the forefront of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations development. As the Marine Corps shifts its focus from land-locked wars to rising tensions in the Indo-Pacific region, MAG-39 will continue to train its "Marines and Machines" to fight and win from the sea. Bartolomea summed up the event, saying, "We demonstrated the unique 21st-century capabilities of the AH-1Z Viper from a maritime environ-

ment. As we continue to adapt to near-peer threats in accordance with the National Defense Strategy and the Commandant's Planning Guidance, we are focused on modernizing the digital interoperability, survivability and lethality of the 'Z.' These improvements will help to maintain the operational viability of the Viper in support of naval and joint forces beyond 2030."

1stLt Zachary Bodner, USMC

## GULFPORT, MISS. MARSOC Takes Certification Exercise to the Next Level

Marine Raiders with Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) conducted a series of exercises in the Gulf Coast region aimed at streamlining integration of forces at various command levels during October and November 2019. The three 10-day exercises were a collaborative effort between MARSOC, governmental agencies and other stakeholders to evaluate Marine Special Operations units deploying in support of Theater Special Operations Commands and Combined Joint Special Operations Task Forces across the globe.

RAVEN Unit Readiness Exercise serves as the certification exercise for a soon-to-be-deploying Marine Special Operations Company. It has evolved into a multilevel venue to integrate the various command structures and capabilities deployed by MARSOC. Each level of command, down to the team, is challenged in planning and execution, as well as command and control activities in urban environments. Through RAVEN, the MARSOC commander ensures operational readiness and capability of Marine Special Operations forces to conduct special operations missions across a range of military operations and domains. It tests Marine Raiders' individual and collective abilities to synchronize operations, activities and actions in the information environment with those in the physical environment to affect decision making and mission planning.

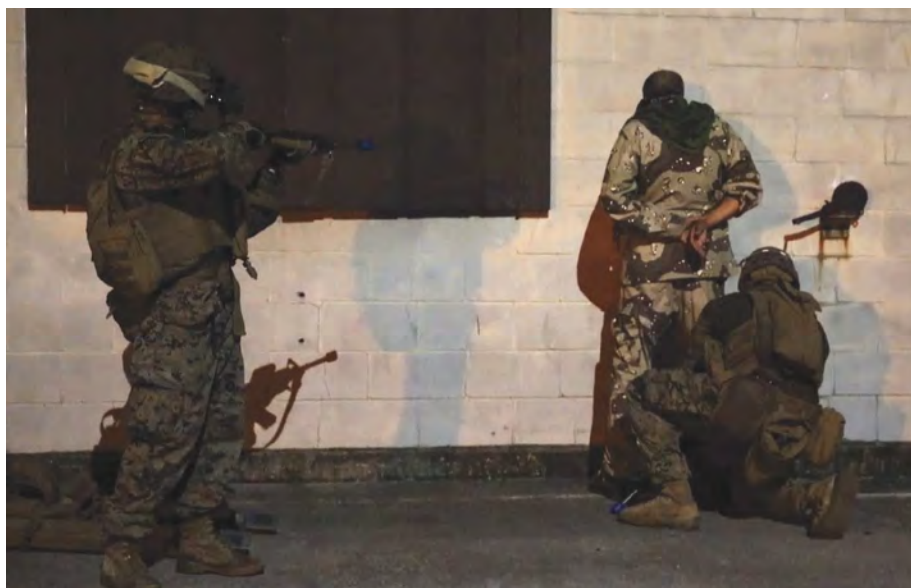
Since its inception in 2012, the unit readiness exercise has become increasingly complex. What was originally done at Fort Irwin, Calif., has expanded to several locations throughout Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi. During the most recent iteration, teams were spread across a 100-mile area with the exercise operations center at the National Guard Base in Gulfport, Miss. The decentralized approach is intended to mimic the challenges in communication, planning and logistics when evaluating considerations for mission execution.

"RAVEN's scenario design incorporates



PFC VICTOR MACKSON, USMC

**An AH-1Z Viper with HMLA-469 takes off during Exercise Viper Storm at MCAS Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 11, 2019. The exercise was designed to demonstrate the essential role the aircraft plays in deterring potential adversaries and providing combat-ready units the capability to engage from the sea.**



LCPL ELIAS PIMENTEL, USMC

Marines with 3rd AA Bn participate in MARSOC's RAVEN unit readiness exercise in Gulfport, Miss., Oct. 13, 2019. The Marine Raiders integrated with various Marine Corps, Air Force and Army units during the exercise to help ensure that MARSOC continues to provide the nation with an agile, adaptive force to meet the complex demands of the future operating environment.

MARSOC provides the nation with an agile, adaptive force to meet the complex demands of the future operating environment.

"RAVEN incorporates lessons learned from academia, the joint force and re-deploying MARSOC units to maintain a realistic and current exercise. The [Exercises, Training and Education Branch] consistently seeks incorporation of experimental and new technology, equipment and TTPs [tactics, techniques and procedures] into the exercise, providing exposure to the force, and testing and evaluation feedback under simulated real-world conditions," said the officer in charge. "This enables the exercise the ability to immediately implement the commander's initiatives while quickly adapting to emerging indicators of the future operating environment."

current and future dynamics the joint force may encounter to present exercise participants' challenges across the range of military operations," said a former company commander, now the special operations officer in charge of the entirety of training execution, whose name was withheld for security purposes. "Within this, participants must account for the implications of tactical actions across operational and strategic levels. The great

thing about RAVEN is that it lets a unit execute full spectrum operations in a realistic military training environment without any requirements to support the exercise."

It is also an opportunity to enhance collaboration and strengthen operational relationships between members of the SOF community, conventional Marine Corps units and other partners with whom Marine Raiders work closely, ensuring

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LCPL ELIAS PIMENTEL, USMC

**Marine Raiders and Marines from 3rd AA Bn, 1stMarDiv conduct on-off drills aboard an aircraft during Exercise RAVEN, which was conducted across a 100-mile area with the exercise operations center located at the National Guard base in Gulfport, Miss.**

The exercise also capitalizes on the opportunity to further streamline the integration of other special operations forces (SOF) and conventional forces.

“SOF are inherently reliant on support from joint forces across conventional and SOF formations. Conventional forces gain the exposure and experience of working alongside SOF units, and the joint force improves interoperability with both SOF and conventional forces. As Marines, [Raiders] are intimately familiar with the task organized Marine air-ground task force concept. Our understanding of the MAGTF and both USMC and SOCOM concept allow us to improve institutional and operational cooperation through interdependence, interoperability and integration with conventional forces,” said the former company commander.

For this particular exercise, MARSOC integrated with conventional Marine Corps assets from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron (HMH) 366 from 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing; 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment; 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion; and 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion. There was also integration of Air Force Special Operations Command assets from the 73rd and 319th Special Operations Squadrons and the 178th Attack Squadron, and Army Special Operations Task Force. These units were able to come together and execute missions beginning at the target development phase all the way

through mission execution.

“This is the kind of stuff you envision when you join the Marine Corps,” said one of the platoon commanders from 3rd AA Bn. “You can see the added excitement and engagement from my Marines who are getting the added exposure to infantry skills that may have some carry-over for when we have to operate with infantry Marines in the future,” he added. His team of 15 Marines conducted weapons familiarization and close quarters battle drills and planned and executed a raid with the MSOT to which they were attached.

For the MAGTF Marines, the training conducted at RAVEN provides exposure to small unit tactics they might not otherwise receive, particularly units like 3rd AA Bn, whose day-to-day responsibilities are focused on amphibious assault vehicle readiness, water ops and terrain driving.

At the MARSOC company level, RAVEN is the last in a series of training evolutions within the 180-day training cycle a MSOC will execute in preparation for deployment. At this point, units are refining and streamlining processes. Considerations for mobility, sustainment and logistics all require additional planning and coordination, according to a critical skills operator and team chief evaluated during this RAVEN series.

Having first participated in RAVEN as a sergeant, the company gunnery sergeant has seen the exercise grow in scale and

complexity, providing units the ability to execute the full range of special operations core tasks, special insertion skills and missions against an opposing force.

“The command has invested quite a bit of time and money into making the training challenging and realistic,” he said. “While there are still role players, the scenario is much more developed, requiring in-depth analysis in developing possible targets.”

According to this team chief, another aspect that has improved is the extent of the integration of mentor-evaluators and Exercise Control Group into the training.

“It is an opportunity for the team to cross-pollinate [tactics, techniques and procedures] from units across MARSOC. We all have the same baseline, but it comes to identifying gaps and refining efficiencies, down to things as simple as naming conventions,” he said. “Having been a mentor-evaluator and seeing teams go through the stress of the exercise, it is eye-opening to have that outsider’s perspective. It can be time-consuming, but it spreads the learning across the entirety of the exercise.”

MARSOC conducts the RAVEN series several times a year, alternating locations between the Gulf Coast Region and the Kentucky-Tennessee border with the next one scheduled for April 2020.

GySgt Lynn Kinney, USMC



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## Macomb, Ill.



COURTESY OF SCOTT HAINLINE

### After 30 Years, Helo Crash Survivors Personally Thank Corpsman

A Sept. 7, 2019, gathering of Marines who served with 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment from 1986 to 1992 was meaningful for all who attended, but for three in particular, it was a day they'll never forget. Pictured in the photo to the right, Michael Scott, left, and Thomas Woods, right, Marines serving with "Charlie" Co, 1/5, survived a horrific crash of a CH-53D Sea Stallion near Pohang, South Korea, during Operation Team Spirit, March 20, 1989, while traveling to an insertion site. Todd Chamberlain, center, was the Navy corpsman who triaged and treated them aboard USS *Belleau Wood* (LHA-3) following the mishap, which claimed the lives of 18 Marines and one corpsman and injured 15. After numerous surgeries and treatments at the Brooke Army



Medical Center Burn Treatment Unit in San Antonio, Texas, the Marines were discharged and returned home to resume their lives as best they could.

Thanks to social media, the reunion group tracked down Chamberlain, who agreed to make the trip to Macomb, Ill., to meet Scott and Woods more than 30 years after he helped save their lives.

Another notable guest at the reunion was 103-year-old John Moon, a resident of Macomb, who was believed to be the oldest surviving World War II Marine veteran of the Battle of Iwo Jima. On Oct. 29, less than two

months after the reunion, Moon, pictured holding the flag in the top photo, passed away.

Submitted by Scott Hainline

## Rochester, N.Y.

### Cooper Marine Post Celebrates 100th Anniversary

One of only two American Legion posts in the U.S. made up entirely of Marines, the William H. Cooper American Legion Post #603 celebrated its 100th anniversary with a gala held Oct. 10, 2019, in Rochester, N.Y. The post, formed in 1919 by Marines from the Rochester area after they returned home from World War I, was named for one of their own, Sergeant William H. Cooper, who was killed in action during that war.

A proclamation from General David H. Berger, Commandant of the Marine Corps, was delivered in honor of the momentous occasion. Among the many Cooper Post Marines in attendance were (front row, from the left) Steve Grandusky and William "Old Dog" Durand, and (back row, from the left) Bob Miller; Jim Rox; Colonel Matt Nafus, USMCR; Michael Chaba; Bruce VanApeldoorn; and Lou Bouchard. Col Nafus served as the guest speaker.

Submitted by Mike Chaba



PETER KELDERHOUSE JR.

## Triangle, Va.

### Hope For The Warriors Donates “No Man Left Behind” Replica

In observance of the 15th anniversary of the Second Battle of Fallujah, the nonprofit organization Hope For The Warriors donated a 16-inch scaled-down replica of the iconic “No Man Left Behind” monument to the National Museum of the Marine Corps in Triangle, Va., Nov. 13, 2019.

The original full-scale monument was donated to the Marine Corps by Hope For The Warriors and placed in front of the Warrior Hope and Care Center at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., in 2013, with a second monument placed at the center in Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., in 2014. The memorial, which brings to life the photo “Hell House,” taken in Fallujah, Iraq, by combat photographer Lucian Read, was created by artist John Phelps, a Vietnam veteran and Gold Star father whose son, Marine Lance Corporal Chance Phelps, was killed in action in April 2004.

Phelps and Robin Kelleher, co-founder and president of Hope For The Warriors, right, present the replica to Major General James A. Kessler, USMC (Ret), president and CEO of the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation.

“As the Marine Corps continues to complete the final galleries of the National Museum of the Marine Corps, this statue will represent the latest generation of Marines who share the long legacy of all



COURTESY OF HOPE FOR THE WARRIORS

who served before them—their honor, courage, commitment, selfless service and sacrifice,” said MajGen Kessler.

Hope For The Warriors is a national nonprofit that assists veterans, servicemembers and military families with a variety of programming, including clinical health and wellness, sports, and recreation and transition services.

Submitted by Erin McCloskey

## Quantico, Va.



COURTESY OF THE YOUNG MARINES

### Young Marines Holds First-Ever R. Lee Ermey Memorial Golf Tournament

The Young Marines, a national youth organization, raised \$43,000 at its inaugural R. Lee Ermey Memorial Golf Tournament held Sept. 16, 2019, at the Medal of Honor Golf Course on Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

For decades, actor and Marine veteran R. Lee Ermey was the celebrity spokesperson for the Young Marines. He was a frequent


guest and motivational speaker at the Young Marines adult leaders conference and raised money each year at the Young Marines annual golf tournament prior to his passing in April 2018.

In an impressive display of support from those who have held the Corps’ most senior enlisted billet, the tournament was attended by the current Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps and six of his predecessors. Pictured from the left are Carlton W. Kent, 16th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps; Alford L. McMichael, 14th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps; Harold G. Overstreet, 12th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps and Young Marines board member; Lewis G. Lee, 13th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps; John L. Estrada, 15th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps; Micheal P. Barrett, 17th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps and board member of the Young Marines National Foundation; and Troy E. Black,

Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps.

The Young Marines is a national nonprofit youth education and service program for boys and girls from 8 years old and up, through the completion of high school. It promotes the mental, moral and physical development of its members and focuses on teaching the values of leadership, teamwork and self-discipline so its members can live and promote a healthy, drug-free lifestyle.

Submitted by Andy Richardson

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

# Sergeant Major Gilbert H. Johnson

By Cpl Rebecca Carstens, USMC

*Editor's note: The following article received an honorable mention in the 2019 Leatherneck Writing Contest. Major Richard A. "Rick" Stewart, USMC (Ret) sponsored the contest, which is open to enlisted Marines, through the Marine Corps Association and Foundation. Entries for the 2020 contest can be submitted to [leatherneck@mca-marines.org](mailto:leatherneck@mca-marines.org). Deadline is March 31.*

Peaceful. Warm blue ocean waves roll throughout the harbor, leaving traces of lacy white foam on the sunlit sand. Pervading the postcard scene, a small hum begins to fill the island air, steadily increasing to a scream as the water's clear reflection of the sky is shattered by a swarm of Japanese aircraft. The ship's deck sways in battlefield rhythm beneath you, adrenaline racing through your blood while bullets strike in harsh static percussion. Enveloped by chaos, your initial shock evaporates, giving way to a hardened resolve to survive and fight. This is how the morning transpired for many young servicemen on Dec. 7, 1941, at the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

The news spread quickly that Pearl Harbor was attacked by Imperial Japanese forces, marking the United States' first direct involvement in World War II and the immediate end of the U.S. isolation policy. One young African-American Sailor, receiving the news while aboard USS *Wyoming* (BB-32), made a decision that would change his life forever. For out of the destruction, heroes rose to create a stronger military force than ever before, truly exemplifying the words, "for all men are created equal." That Sailor grew to become Sergeant Major Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson—one of those heroes.

Johnson's thriving enthusiasm and magnanimous greatness of spirit enabled him to overcome many challenges and lead others on the same paths to excellence. At the time Johnson began his military career, African Americans were not

allowed to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. Consequently, he enlisted in the U.S. Army 25th Infantry Regiment in the fall of 1923 and served six years honorably. He later enlisted in the U.S. Navy, where he served in the "Steward's Branch"—a segregated portion of the service that was in charge of menial tasks—and attained the rate of steward second class.

On June 25, 1941, President Franklin D.



FILE PHOTO

**SgtMaj Gilbert "Hashmark" Johnson**

Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, "reaffirm[ing] the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color or national origin." This order finally ended the restrictions upon African-Americans enlisting in

the U.S. Marine Corps. At the time of the issuance of this order, Johnson was 37 years old and had already served his country for several years in two other branches of service. Despite this, after the Pearl Harbor attack, he requested a branch transfer. He knew that leaving the Navy and entering the Marine Corps would result in the reduction of his rank, a wage decrease and the loss of all that had been familiar to him over the previous 10 years. Unselfishly, he chose the less traveled road, so that he might bear the title "Marine" and forge the path for future generations to follow.

Though motivation is the word commonly used when speaking of the inner drive that Marines have to excel and succeed, discipline is the enduring foundation upon which needed change is truly wrought and plans are carried to full fruition. On Nov. 14, 1942, Johnson reported for training at Montford Point, located within Camp Lejeune, N.C. There, he earned his lasting nickname, "Hashmark," denoting the three service stripes on his uniform that represented his previous service in the Army and Navy, outnumbering the absent rank on his shoulders as a newly enlisted Marine Corps private.

Johnson quickly demonstrated his leadership experience and dedication to the mission, and was promoted four times in the next year, pinning on the rank of staff sergeant in August of 1943. He became one of the first African-American drill instructors, demanding the utmost from every recruit he trained. Serving as one of the first African-American men to lead desegregation in the Marine Corps was a difficult task fraught with racial prejudice and many obstacles, on top of the already numerous rigors of military service. Johnson truly embodied the Marine Corps motto, "Semper Fidelis" to all around him with his refusal to ever

**Johnson truly embodied the Marine Corps motto, "Semper Fidelis" to all around him with his refusal to ever give anything less than his best, nor to accept that from anyone else.**



USMC



ROGER SMITH

**Above:** Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson had served in both the Army and the Navy when he joined the Corps in late 1942. He became a DI as a PFC and was a recruit first sergeant at Montford Point by 1943.

**Left:** The Marine Corps started enlisting African-Americans on June 1, 1942. The first class of 1,200 volunteers began their training three months later as members of the 51st Composite Defense Bn at Montford Point. Their training included learning to operate anti-aircraft machine guns.

**Below:** New recruits learn to drill as members of the 51st Composite Defense Bn at Montford Point in New River, N.C.



ROGER SMITH

Once again leading the charge, he went on to lead 25 combat patrols into the jungles of Guam, proving many times over that courage knows no race or creed.

**Right: The first six African-American drill instructors included PFC “Hashmark” Johnson, fourth from left, and PFC Edgar Huff, far right.**

give anything less than his best, nor to accept that from anyone else.

Quickly advancing through the enlisted ranks, Johnson became the sergeant major of Montford Point Camp in January of 1945, the same place he had reported to as a recruit only three years prior. It would later be renamed “Camp Gilbert H. Johnson” in honor of him. Later that year, he was reassigned as the sergeant major of the 52nd Defense Battalion, a unit that was serving on Guam in the middle of WW II. Upon his arrival, Johnson discovered that the African-American men of the unit were being assigned to labor details and held exempt from combat patrols. Knowing that these men did not join the Marine Corps to be kept away from combat, he spoke to the commanding officer of the unit and had the exemption revoked. Once again leading the charge, he went on to lead 25 combat patrols into the jungles of Guam, proving many times over that courage knows no race or creed. Because of his initiative, he continued to be a dynamic force within the Marine Corps, revoking a restrictive policy and granting credibility to his decision by being at the forefront of the danger.

Following the disbandment of the 52nd Defense Battalion in 1946, he served the remainder of his enlistment in Korea, beginning with 1st Shore Party Bn. During the rest of his career, he was often the highest-ranking enlisted man in units comprised largely of Caucasian men. Never one to shy away from a challenge, he continued to thrive in diversity, mentoring young Marines and providing guidance that only his years of experience could give. His final tour of duty was with 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division. He retired in 1959 after completing his 33-year military career, the last 17 years of which he spent as a hard-charging Marine.

Johnson died in 1972 of a heart attack at the age of 67 in Jacksonville, N.C. In his final speech, he spoke of his time leading Marines and the essence of his personal ethos, “devotion to duty and determination, equal to all and transcended by none.”

Johnson’s courageous willingness to



COURTESY OF SGTMAJ EDGAR R. HUFF, USMC (RET)

**Right: MSgt Gilbert H. “Hashmark” Johnson, sergeant major of Montford Point Camp in 1948, watches Pvt John W. Davis cut a stencil for a camp order.**



USMC

take the initiative and enthusiasm for always going above and beyond the call of duty elevated his life from the rest and established his legacy in our history books. In America’s time of need, he was a guiding light for many to follow, overcoming adversity not only in war but on the home front as well. He led by example tirelessly—earning the eagle, globe, and anchor, going on to train Marines who would fight honorably in

WW II, and effecting change at all levels through his leadership in every clime and place.

*Author’s bio: Corporal Rebecca Carstens was born in Los Angeles, Calif. She entered the Marine Corps in 2016 and now serves as an aviation ordnance-man aboard Marine Corps Base Hawaii.*



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# Breaking Barriers

## Interview with a Montford Point Marine

By Kwame Gyamfi

*Sgt Primus Kinlaw, USMC (Ret) born on April 25, 1925, is one of the original Montford Point Marines. Sgt Kinlaw and his wife, Kathleen, have been married for more than 68 years and together raised seven children in Jacksonville, N.C., in a small community called Bell Fork Homes. The community was home to a large number of African-American Marines who integrated the Marine Corps in the 1940s. Recently, Sgt Kinlaw sat down with his son Kwame Gyamfi and discussed his experiences as a Marine and family man.*

### Joining the Marine Corps

**Kwame Gyamfi:** What inspired you to go into the Marine Corps?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** My brother Henry was in the Navy and was at Pearl Harbor when the Japanese bombed it. When he finished boot camp, he came home to Brittons Neck, S.C. During those days, we didn't see many people wearing military uniforms. I went down to the local office to sign up and I saw the [Marine Corps] uniforms. I told them, that I wanted to sign up for the service with the poster of the man wearing that green uniform. I was 17 years old.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** Did you finish high school before you joined the Marine Corps?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** No, I was 17 years old with one year left but there wasn't anything going on in Brittons Neck, S.C., any way other than farming.

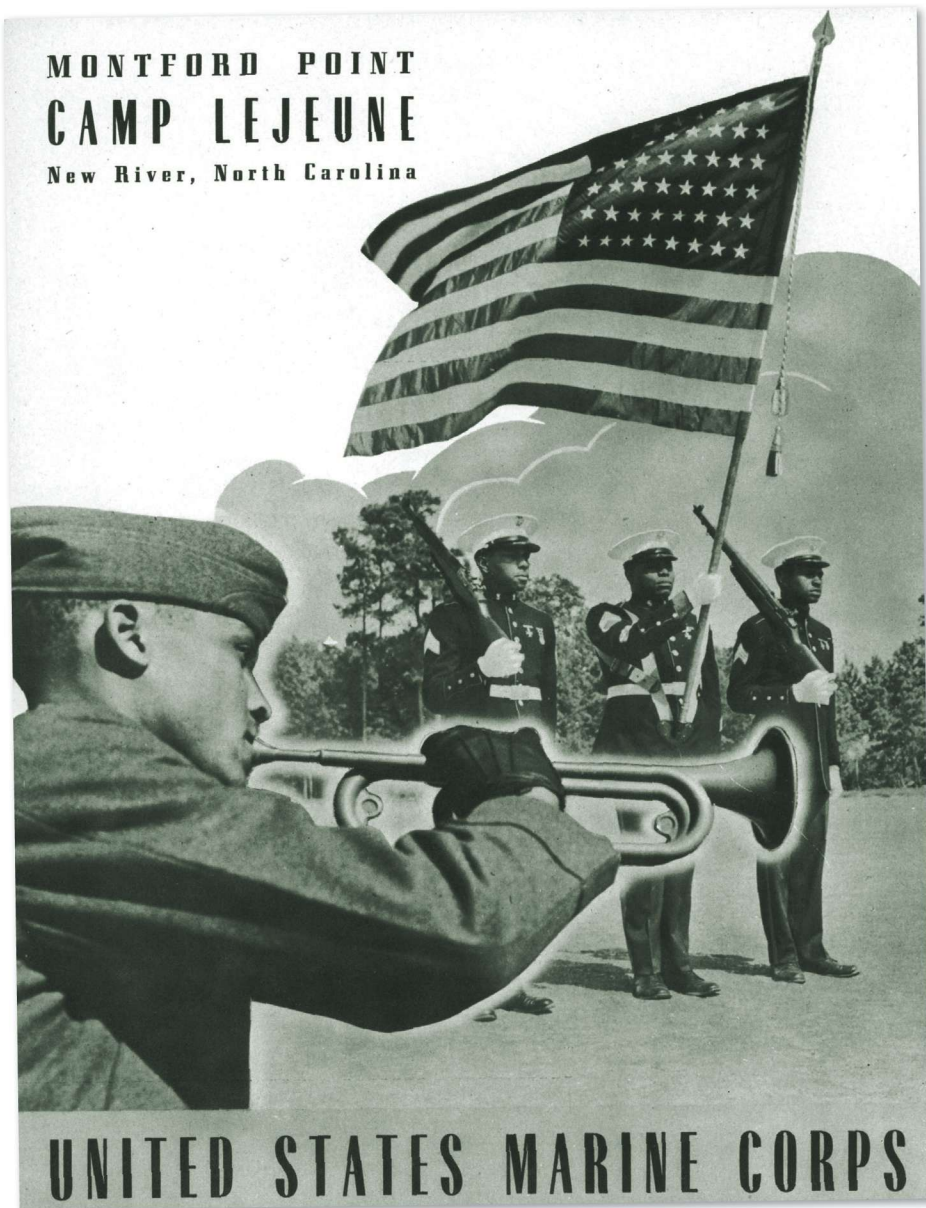
**Kwame Gyamfi:** Did your parents try to stop you from joining the service?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** No, I wanted to do it and no one stopped me. But, after I got in, I tried to get my mother to write a letter to get me out.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** What made you want to get out soon after you got in?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** When they started "manhandling" me at Montford Point, I wanted my mama to get me out of here [laughter]. I remember the drill sergeant smacking me upside my head as soon as I stepped off the bus.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** When you retired you were an E-6?



The title page from the 1943 Montford Point Platoon Book shows several of the original Montford Point Marines who helped to integrate the Marine Corps during World War II.

**Sgt Kinlaw:** Yes, I retired an E-6. No, I didn't aspire to go higher in rank due to the politics of that time. It becomes more political and more about relationships and I wasn't that type of [Marine].

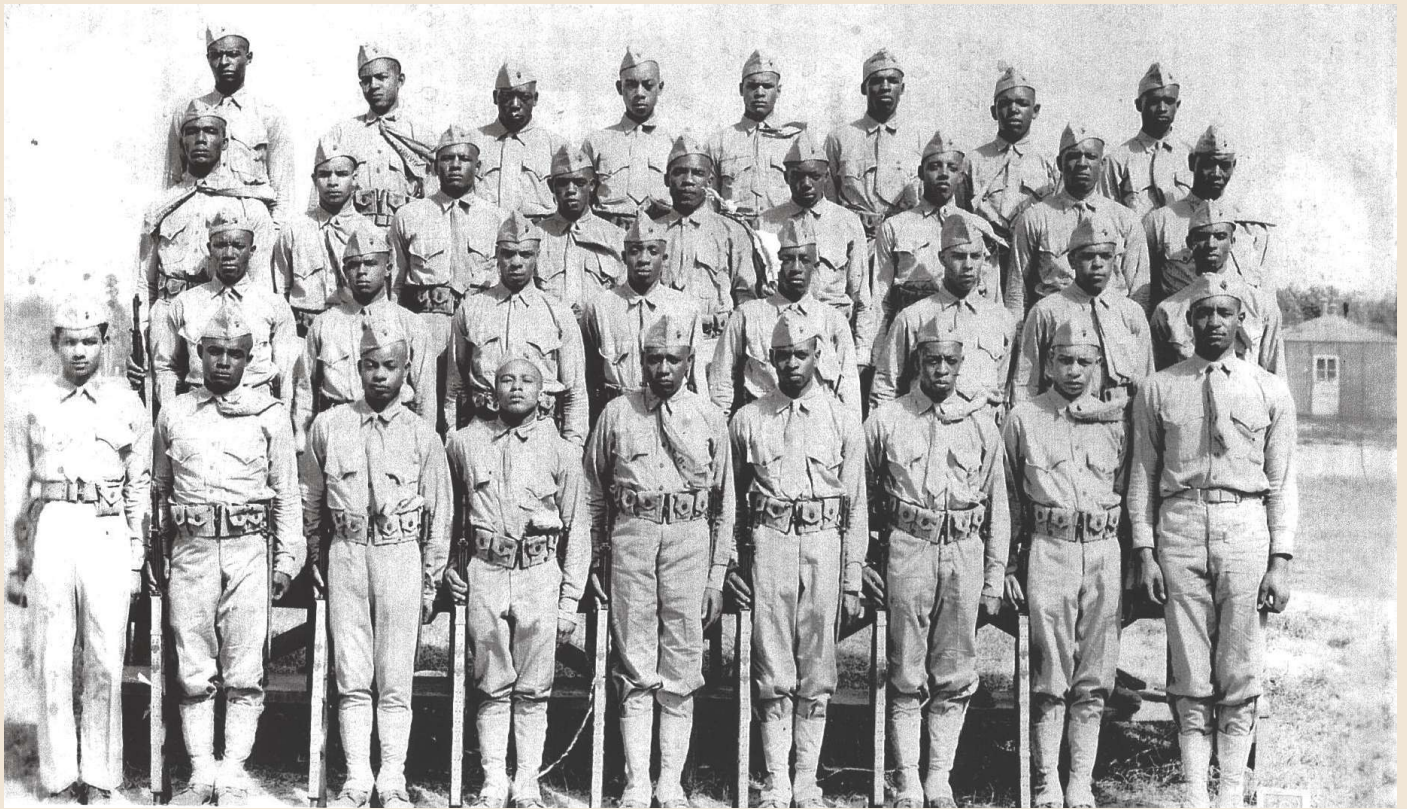
### Serving in World War II And the Korean War

**Kwame Gyamfi:** Did you realize that you were the first African-American men to integrate the Marine Corps?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** No, they started taking us in 1942 and I came in 1943. It was during the wartime, so we didn't think about it as anything historical or significant. The last group of Montford Point Marines came in 1949.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** When did you actually see action in WW II?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** Right after our two-month boot camp training, we were shipped



**Platoon 202, Company A at Montford Point in 1943. Today, Montford Point is known as Camp Johnson, a satellite base of Camp Lejeune. Home to Marine Corps Combat Service Support Schools, the base is named after SgtMaj Gilbert H. "Hashmark" Johnson.**



**Marines made good use of the camp library after routine duty hours in 1945. The Montford Point Marines were restricted from visiting many liberty spots in nearby Jacksonville, N.C., due to segregation laws in place at the time.**

overseas. We immediately saw combat because it was wartime. I was in the South Pacific area.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** Do you remember losing fellow Marines in WW II and the Korean War?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** Yes, I lost quite a few people.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** The Korean War is where you were injured?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** Yes, it was a different war than WW II. The Korean War was like working with the Korean people during the day and later fighting them at night.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** When did you decide to make the Marine Corps a career?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** Right after the Korean War ... I made it a career and retired after 22 years, 4 months and 28 days. I'm glad I went in and stayed for 22 years and I'm glad that I survived.

### **Wife and Kids**

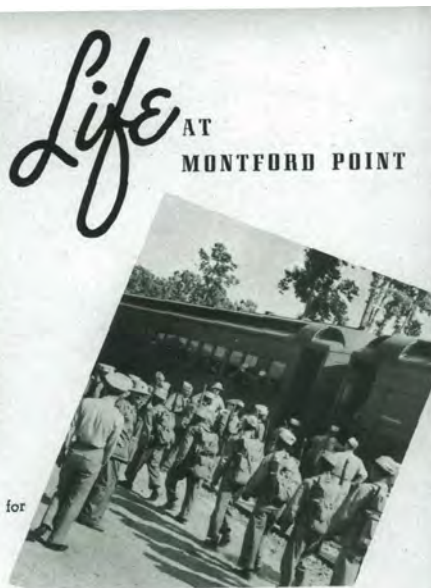
**Kwame Gyamfi:** How did you meet your wife?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** That's a long story. She was in high school. I met her through one of her sisters that worked on base. Her [sister's] name was Mammie. I dropped [Mammie] her off at home and met her sister, Kathy, who later became my wife.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** How long was it before you asked for her hand in marriage?



Partial view of camp.



Troops leaving for ports unknown.

Librarian at work.

Troops on the march.

Main entrance.

Fire-fighting equipment.



These select images from a 1943 platoon book provide a glimpse of life on base for Marines assigned to Montford Point, Camp Lejeune, N.C.

**Sgt Kinlaw:** It was about a year and half. I did a tour in Korea and came back and married her. We kept in touch by writing letters back and forth. We got married in 1951.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** When did you start your family?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** We had our first child in 1952. We stayed at the Opa Locka, Fla., Marine Corps base. We stayed there for about four years and returned ... to Camp Lejeune. Later we were stationed in Hawaii for a few years and then moved back to Jacksonville, N.C., to a community called Bell Fork Homes. Bell Fork Homes was a segregated housing district. We had a total of seven children with three born at the naval hospital in Camp Lejeune, N.C.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** Do you think that

raising your kids with strict discipline is a good thing?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** Yes, there were a lot of kids that grew up without parents from the Marine Corps and those kids didn't have any discipline and got into a lot of trouble.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** So, you have no regrets about how you raised your children?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** I sure don't.

### Civil Rights and Segregation

**Kwame Gyamfi:** What was your first experience with segregation?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** There was segregation on base. In the cafeteria, African-Americans weren't allowed to eat in the hall. The cafeteria staff would bring us our food. We thought it was funny, because we were getting personal service.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** Can you tell me the story about the desegregation of Paradise Point Golf Course?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** The golf caddy for the base general was an African-American named Mr. Chapman. The general asked him about golfing over the weekend. The caddy reminded the general that African-Americans were not allowed to play golf on base over the weekend. Soon afterwards, the general signed an order to desegregate the golf course so that African-Americans could play golf anytime including the weekends.

### Kathleen Kinlaw's Thoughts on Being a Military Wife

**Kwame Gyamfi:** What was it like in the early days as a military wife?

**Kathleen Kinlaw:** My husband really took care of me. He was gone a lot and I was home with the children. But, if I needed something or was at the hospital he would be there and I really appreciated that.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** What were some of the low points of military life?

**Kathleen Kinlaw:** The times that he was away from the family was tough. The children and I would spend time at the church and we had to figure out how to keep ourselves happy. It was lonely.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** What was the most fascinating time of your marriage?

**Kathleen Kinlaw:** It was celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary. Also, having our children. When we had our first child, I didn't know how to change a diaper. So, I prayed to God for guidance, and three military wives helped me to get through it along with Navy Relief.

### Final Thoughts

**Kwame Gyamfi:** What would you do differently about your experience in the Marine Corps?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** I would have gotten a higher education and would have become a commissioned officer. When I first came into the military, I was just a country boy from a small town and really didn't understand anything about the service.

**Kwame Gyamfi:** I guess that is the life of an enlisted man?

**Sgt Kinlaw:** That is right, buddy [laughter].

*Editor's note: All photos from the collection of Joseph H. Carpenter, U.S. Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections.*

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Michael Ehline, Esq

Renato Laranja



LCPL CALEB T. MAHER, USMC

Marines assigned to 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, forward deployed to 3rd Marine Division as part of the Unit Deployment Program, explore the capabilities of the UTV at Eagle Point Training Area, South Korea, June 6, 2017.

# Marine Corps Utility Task Vehicles Receiving Multiple Upgrades

By Ashley Calingo

**T**he Marine Corps' Utility Task Vehicles (UTV) are undergoing several upgrades designed to improve the safety and performance of the vehicle. Using critical feedback from Marines and taking inspiration from a variety of sources spanning the automotive industry to include desert racing, engineers and logisticians from the Light Tactical Vehicle program office at Marine Corps Systems Command's Program Executive Officer Land Systems have been working diligently to research, test, procure and implement changes to the UTV. These changes include high-clearance control arms, new run-flat tires, floorboard protection, a road march kit, a clutch improvement kit and an environmental protection cover.

"We bought the vehicle as a [commercial-off-the-shelf] solution, so it's not

**"With the different types  
of terrain Marines cover  
in these vehicles,  
we noticed the [original]  
control arms were  
frequently getting bent."**

**—Jason Engstrom**

going to have everything we want right from the factory," said Jason Engstrom, lead systems engineer for the UTV at PEO Land Systems. Since PEO Land Systems started fielding the UTV in 2017, Marines have consistently pushed the limits of their vehicles, said Engstrom, in many ways beyond what is expected or imagined with a typical off-the-shelf solution.

"Even though we're in the operations, maintenance and sustainment phases with the vehicle, it's such a new vehicle, and we're seeing Marines constantly push the limits of the truck. Every day we're seeing Marines come up with new ideas on how to use the truck," Engstrom added.

## High Clearance Control Arms

The first of these upgrades involves installing high-clearance control arms on the vehicle—a crucial component of the vehicle's suspension system.

"With the different types of terrain Marines cover in these vehicles, we noticed the [original] control arms were frequently getting bent," said Engstrom. "Rocks were probably the biggest hazard, and that's primarily where the Marines were driving."

A bent or damaged control arm can disable a vehicle, said UTV logistician Rodney Smith. To address this issue, the



ASHLEY CALINGO

**Above: Jason Engstrom, a UTV engineer with Program Executive Officer Land Systems, reviews several upgrades to the vehicle with Marines at the Transportation Demonstration Support Area aboard MCB Quantico, Va., Dec. 4, 2019.**

team looked to industry and ultimately settled on a control arm made of material about twice as strong as the original control arm that provided an extra 2.5 inches of clearance.

With this upgrade, Marines are better equipped to drive off the beaten path while minimizing their risk of damaging the control arms on their vehicles.

### Clutch Improvement Kit

The UTV team is also outfitting the vehicle with a clutch improvement kit. The UTV's clutch is an important component of the vehicle's transmission system, which is essential in making the vehicle run.

"One of the things that came right from the factory was a belt-driven [transmission] system," said Engstrom. "Just like with the control arms, a broken belt takes the whole vehicle out of action."

The upgraded clutch kit reconfigures the clutch system, enabling it to better engage the belt to keep it from breaking, said Engstrom.

### Floorboard Protection

The team has begun upgrading the vehicle's floorboard, which showed evidence of damage after a recent deployment. "When Marines deployed the vehicles to Australia, they found that high-density sticks and branches on the ground have the potential to pop up and puncture the plastic floorboard, which is a safety hazard," said Engstrom.

**Marines are pushing the vehicles to their limits to provide feedback to Engstrom and his team.**

LCPL CALEB T. MAHER, USMC



LCPL WILLIAM CHOCKEY, USMC

**Marines with 3rd Reconnaissance Bn, 3rdMarDiv, III Marine Expeditionary Force, maneuver to a MOUT town at MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, Calif., Jan. 23, 2018, as part of Integrated Training Exercise 2-18.**

Upon receiving this feedback from Marines, the UTV team researched and tested various materials to use in protecting the floorboard. “We wanted to find a solution that kept the weight down because putting too much weight in the design of the vehicle—like a reinforced floorboard—impacts the amount of cargo Marines can carry on it,” said Smith. “Every pound counts.”

## Tires

For the UTV’s tire upgrades, the team turned to a novel source for inspiration: the Baja off-road racing industry.

According to Engstrom, “there’s a new approach to run-flat technology called ‘Tireballs.’ ” “Inside each tire are 16 inflatable cells, so if any one cell pops from running over a spike or nail, you’d still have 15 other cells full of air to continue driving on,” he added.

This, said Engstrom, significantly enhances the UTV’s operational readiness for Marines, allowing them to go farther for longer in the UTV. Along with the Tireballs, the team selected an upgraded tire from BF Goodrich that is more durable than the previous one, exceeding performance requirements in various environments that mimic the challenging terrains Marines face.

“The Baja racers are using these tires now while completing 1,000-mile races out in the desert,” said Engstrom. “We decided it would be a good upgrade for Marines.”

**“Inside each tire are  
16 inflatable cells, so if any  
one cell pops from running  
over a spike or nail, you’d still  
have 15 other cells full of  
air to continue driving on.”  
—Jason Engstrom**

## Environmental Protection Cover

The Environmental Protection Cover, another upgrade to the UTV, provides Marines with protection from the elements while they’re out in the field. “Have you ever been in a convertible on a hot, sunny day and put the roof up? That’s exactly what this is,” said UTV engineer Christopher Swift. “It’s necessary after being out in the field 8-12 hours a day in the hot sun, especially if it’s the only shelter available.”

## Road March Kit

The team started fielding the UTV’s Road March Kit—comprising turn signals, a horn, and a rearview mirror—last March. Marines from III Marine Expeditionary Force requested the addition of these features for safety purposes, especially when transitioning between training areas on roads also used by civilian motorists.

The Road March Kit upgrade, along with the other vehicle upgrades, underscores the importance Marines’ user feedback is to the acquisition professionals tasked with delivering products to the warfighter.

“We try to meet customer needs within the requirement [determined by the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration],” said UTV Team Lead Lorrie Owens. “If we can meet the customers’ need to make it more reliable and durable, we will certainly do so within the realm of the requirement.”

The UTV team is taking advantage of the vehicle’s general maintenance schedule to implement the upgrades, which will be done alongside regular maintenance and services.

*Author’s bio: Ashley Calingo is a public affairs specialist at Program Executive Officer Land Systems.*

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A wave of 4thMarDiv Marines hit the beach on D-day at Iwo Jima as another boatload of battle-tested veterans is disgorged on the beach by an invasion craft.

From the *Leatherneck Archives*: May 1945

# D-Day on Iwo Jima

By SP3 Bryce Walton, USCG

It was another D-day; another H-hour. For many of the 23rd Regiment of 4th Marine Division—veterans of Saipan and Tinian—it seemed the same old story. To many of them, it was the first one.

The 23rd was to hit Yellow Beaches 1 and 2, the central beachhead position along the 2 ½ miles of landing beach. They were to advance straight up the slope to seize the first airstrip, advance on to cut the island in two, and circle to the right into the northern bulge, the main defensive part of the island.

It was all figured out—on paper.

To Lieutenant Paul F. Cook, commander of Company A, 133 Seabees attached to the 23rd Regiment, the shore looked okay.

It didn't look bad as their LCVT dipped in on a rough sea toward the blackish colored line. It was H-hour plus 30 minutes. It didn't seem logical that the beach would be tough. It had been strafed, rocketed, bombed from the air, and shelled from battlewagons and cruisers taking more bombardment with more explosives for its area than any other island to date.

The Japanese didn't believe in logic.

Just in front of the high square prow of the LCVT and to either side high fountains of water sprayed upward. The boat's coxswain, Seaman First Class Caisey Kidd from Wheelwright, Ky., smiled reassuringly. "It's all right," he yelled. "It's our own shells moving in ahead of us to

keep the Japanese dazed and glassy-eyed."

Caisey Kidd was wrong.

They realized suddenly that the outlines along the beach were wrecked Navy and Coast Guard landing craft. One Seabee said he saw a bunch of the advance assault waves of the 23rd up the slope running like hell.

Two beach parties, each of 45 men and one officer, one under Lieutenant Commander Loomis and the other under LCDR Baldwin, had tried to move in early to set up their regular beach party direction system for landing men and supplies. The wrecked boats were evidence of their disaster. Both beach parties were put out of action with heavy casualties. The ad-

**Much of the mechanized equipment, which was absolutely essential to a successful drive into Iwo, was put out of action the first day. For a while it seemed impossible to get needed supplies on the beach. (USCG photo)**

vance wave of Seabees under LT Cook had to operate completely on its own without direction. The men would have to set up their own combined shore and beach party.

They would have to use their own judgment as to how to land and where on the treacherous beach through the unpredictable gyrations of a freak surf.

The shore party headquarters personnel of Company A with LT Cook consisted of Carpenter's Mate Third Class M.C. Gille, from Detroit, Mich.; Carpenter's Mate H.H. Olson, from Los Angeles, Calif.; Electrician's Mate First Class H.T. Ashworth, from Westport, Conn.; and EM1 A.E. Powell, Portland, Ore. Of this staff, only LT Cook was still on the job at the end of D-day plus one. All the others were evacuated casualties. The Japanese had made a direct mortar hit on their dugout.

The fire on the beach was murderous. It came from both flanks—from the heights of Mount Suribachi on the left, a lone high volcanic crater on the extreme left tip of the island being assaulted by the 5th Division and from the high area forming the bulk of the island to the right—a deadly territory of pillboxes, gun emplacements, machine guns, mortars, mines, snipers, all manned by Imperial Japanese troops with orders to fight to the last man.

From both these areas, from right and left, the invasion beachhead was one maelstrom of explosion which even the astute 24 hours a day duty of the air liaison section could not control this early in the



operation. Japanese emplacements were reported to the section commander who sent word to Heckler and Black Cat observation planes flying constantly over the island to spot these places and report them to naval guns or attack themselves. But this early in the operation only a small percentage of the positions had been spotted and not many of them knocked out.

From all sections of Iwo, the beachhead was under fire. Snipers hid in wrecked landing craft and picked off men, particularly one sniper who played hell from a demolished Japanese lugger on the right flank of Yellow Beach 1. Finally, on D+1, some Marines went in and got him. Machine-gun emplacements above the beach on the terraces and in sandstone pillboxes at the base of the airfield kept a chattering death raining down on the area.

**The Pioneers, Seabees and Marines of the 23rd were trying to get stuff ashore. Tanks were groping to find a road inland but in the shifting sand, there weren't any roads.**

The air was filled with shrapnel from exploding mortar and artillery shells and land mines. Many dying and wounded men were lying on the smoking sand.

Through this hell the Pioneers, Seabees and Marines of the 23rd were trying to get stuff ashore. Tanks were groping to find a road inland but in the shifting sand, there



**Under fire from Japanese machine guns and mortars, Marines of the first waves dig in on Iwo's volcanic ash beach. Equipment was shelled and put out of commission almost as fast as it was landed.**



USMC

**On D+1 at 9 a.m., Feb. 20, 1945 Marines push forward battling both the Japanese and the terrain.**

weren't any roads. Other tanks struggled over terraces one and two, and even up to three, only to be blasted by mortars. A few did set up and over the crumbling sand hills. Ensign R.H. Ross of Hartford, Conn., saw one tank blown up 50 yards away as he was struggling with a 37 mm, trying to drag it through the sand.

"It was trying to edge over the first terrace toward the airstrip," he said that night. "It was hit by a mortar that blew off its right tread. Marines began trying to get out of the turret. Another mortar lit right in the turret. The tank spread apart a little. All the Marines were killed."

It seemed impossible to get all the supplies and equipment ashore that was necessary to keep the advancing assault troops going. The Seabees hugged the sand. Many of them hadn't been able to get more than 10 yards inland. Men were falling with a certain horrible steadiness. Mortar craters appeared everywhere, all the time.

It was proving the worst beachhead operation in the long chain of such amphibious campaigns stretching across the Pacific. The Seabees, primarily a construction battalion to reinforce behind assault waves of the 23rd and get roads up from the beach over which to run in supplies and ammo, found themselves dug in behind rifles and 37 mms. They suffered casualties and deaths equal to

any front-line outfit to come under the devastating fire.

The staff beach parties had been evacuated because of their high casualties and all direction for landing seemed lost. The advancing front line troops were moving forward slowly and were almost to the airstrip.

**Much of this mechanized equipment, absolutely necessary to a successful drive into Iwo, was put out of action the first day.**

But everything seemed against getting in the supplies to keep them going. There was the volcanic sand—ash like quicksand that resisted any attempt to build roads or land vehicles; the unique variation of high and low tides, and a terrific undertow that breached landing craft, turning them sideways to the beach and pounding them to kindling.

The heavier landing craft, LSMs and LCIs and even Coast Guard-manned LSTs, were edging in to get more tanks and equipment ashore. But as soon as cranes, bulldozers, trucks and cats staggered off into the thick sand, mortars tore

into them and shrapnel cut into delicate motorized parts. Much of this mechanized equipment, absolutely necessary to a successful drive into Iwo, was put out of action the first day. Chief L.A. Bean of Portland, Ore., later wounded by the sniper in the Japanese lugger, received high praise from the company for his efforts in getting equipment ashore from an LSM. He tried to keep on working despite a bullet through his shoulder.

Almost all the cranes, bulldozers and trucks were back in operation the second day, due to the ingenuity of Seabee mechanics who swapped parts and sweated all night under fire.

Meanwhile, the wounded and dying were being brought down to the beach—but no further. Inability to get landing craft in made evacuation of casualties another trial. Landing craft continued to crack up on the beach.

Another story should be written about the Navy corpsmen who tried to save lives on Yellow Beaches 1 and 2. But no one ever could be graphic enough to cover what 12 corpsmen did under heartbreaking and impossible circumstances.

It wasn't long before only one medical corpsman remained on the job giving emergency treatment to the injured mounting on the beach. He was Pharmacist Mate 3 Richard Dreyfuss. Casualties had to be given more than just preliminary treatment because of the impossibility, at the moment, of evacuating them to the LST hospital ships off shore.

Dreyfuss did a job that those who saw him and those whose lives he saved can never forget. Trying to do the work of the 12 corpsmen, or possibly the work of three times as many, he crawled, dodged, and staggered up and down the beach through enemy fire from one shell hole to another, from one line of wounded to another, everywhere he thought he was needed. Without regard for his own life, Dreyfuss faced almost impossible odds. He moved inland later with his regiment.

Deserving equal credit is H.J. Kelsch of Roseland, Mass., who followed Dreyfuss, keeping him covered as best he could with a Browning Automatic Rifle.

Meanwhile, the first day of the amphibious assault on Iwo passed. Captain Jack Palmer, shore party commander of the Pioneers, was wounded and replaced by LT Jack Carver. They dug in for the night. Late that night a mortar fell into the dug-out of LT Cook and Co A headquarters staff. All were shell-shocked or wounded.

Companies B and C of the Seabees had moved in during this time. That helped some when orders came that ammunition had to be got up to the front lines. There still were no trucks ashore, or if there



**Smashed by Japanese mortar and shellfire and trapped by Iwo's treacherous black ash sands, amtracs and other vehicles of war lay knocked out on the volcanic fortress. (Photo by PhoM3c Robert M. Warren, USN)**

were a few vehicles working, there were no roads. The ammo would have to be carried by hand.

The sky was lighted by starshells. There still was no let-up in the murderous Japanese shelling of the beachheads. Casualties continued to mount steadily.

LT Cook was disabled temporarily, nerves shattered from the dugout disaster. "I don't know what the riflemen up at the front, or any of us, would have done without Chief Douglas Davis," LT Cook kept repeating the next day. The lieutenant's command was assumed by Davis, and it was his untiring efforts that got the ammo up through the network of enemy fire to the front lines.

"Front lines," mused Chief Davis. "There weren't any damn front lines. This whole island is a front line. You get it anywhere."

They got enough ammo up there to tide them over until the next day, struggling through the bottomless mush of sand with the backbreaking shells. They stumbled

over 500-pound aerial bombs buried by the Japanese in the sand as mines.

One man staggered beneath a load, his neck wrapped in a big swath of blood-stained bandage. He had been working all day under constant fire unloading an LSM. The Japanese sniper hidden in the lugger had got him across the neck. Despite his wound he carried on all night. The man was Seaman Richard D. Fries, from Sioux City, Iowa.

And so it went; D-day, D+1, D+2, D+3, D+4, D+5. The firing never stopped. Those who didn't get it directly by a shell got their nerves pounded steadily. Shock casualties were high. On D+1 the situation was relieved somewhat and a semblance of working order was set up and supplies began arriving in greater quantity. A naval and Coast Guard beach party command under supervision of beach masters and the regular shore party command under Marine guidance began operating. Although this was done on all the beachheads along the entire length of

the area, this account is limited to Yellow Beaches 1 and 2 where the 4th Division's 23rd regiment landed. These beaches bore the brunt of supply problems coming in to the central beachhead.

Lieutenant Commander G.A. Hebert from Culver City, Calif., a veteran of the First World War, came in as beach master on the left flank of Yellow 1 to work with Lt Carl C. Gabel who served as commander of the Marine shore party for the 23rd, although Lt Gabel's regular job was regimental quartermaster.

As far as enemy fire and odds were concerned, D+1 was worse than D-day. There seemed to be more intense mortar fire, and there was much more mechanized equipment and personnel to hit. But worst of all was the weather. The day was stormy and the surf ran high. The beaches proved a trap for the smaller landing craft. Wrecked Higgins boats, LCVPs and other landing craft littered the beach.

Herbert and Gabel worked together under these colossal odds and the most

**As these countless boats  
came into the beach  
the loud speakers  
bellowed out orders.  
Without expert direction  
the thick traffic would  
have piled up and  
bottlenecked or gone into  
the wrong beach.**

important unit in amphibious operations—the beach master, beach party—team was thrown into action. They worked together five days and nights with little or no sleep.

On the right flank of Yellow Beach 1 LT Crosby of the Coast Guard-manned assault transport, Bayfield, set up a beach party command, only to suffer casualties and be broken up.

Hebert and Gabel were the vortex of the ship-to-shore-to-interior setup on the beach. Everything that should have been done the first day had to be done now, and fast.

Hebert, as beach master, had the responsibility of bringing in boats to the beach, handling them on the beach, keeping it clear of wrecked craft, and maintaining salvage parties. He was also responsible for evacuation of all wounded from the beach seaward, building traffic roads along the beach, and rebuilding the shoreline when it became disfigured by the surf.

It was Hebert's opinion that the beachheads at Iwo Jima were the toughest any beach or shore party he ever headed had to tackle. Bulldozer watches were established to keep roads open, but it was just a case of pushing a track through the bottomless mush of bogging sand over and over again.

Lt Gabel's job began where Hebert's left off. To Gabel went the job, mainly, of getting the supplies from the beach inland, getting inland casualties to the beach, directing some 2,000 Seabees and maintaining their lines of communication and supply.

From their beach party-shore party headquarters set up as one unit about 30 yards off the shoreline, these two worked together as an example of the cooperation that was necessary to take the island. Perhaps the most useful and colorful parts of this setup were the public address systems employed by each man. They could be heard a quarter of a mile away. They amplified the voices of Hebert and Gabel, which soon had become hardly more than



hoarse whispers, to voices of thunderous dimensions.

These systems blared out at anything in sight needing direction. The phone was handled by each of the party commanders from a high vantage point just off the shoreline.

The foul weather kept up on D+1. Waves ran high and disastrous on D+1 and D+2. As fast as salvage or shore parties cleared them away, other craft were wrecked in the rush to get supplies and mechanized equipment ashore.

From the line of departure a few thousand yards off shore, the various boat waves came into the beachheads with personnel and supplies. They were told where to go in toward the beach by the control boats. The control boats received combination orders from both ships at sea and the beach commander and shore party commanders.

As these countless boats came into the beach, the loudspeakers bellowed out orders. Without expert direction the thick traffic would have piled up and bottle-



**A view along Yellow Beach during the initial days of the Battle of Iwo Jima.**

mortar and sniper fire, and a few other un-analogous features. Amphibious tractors moved from land to beach. Huge amphibious tanks moved inland. Trucks, jeeps, and more amphibious tractors clanked down the gaping runways of Coast Guard-manned LSTs. Bulldozers pushed a wrecked landing craft to one side, then pulled a truck from a hole that had been washed out, causing the vehicle to bog down before the LST's ramp.

Amphibious tractors had colorful names such as Reef Rock Katy and Coral Gertie. A jeep jumped out and got stuck in the sand, sinking up to its engine. It was lettered Dung Ho. It also was pulled out fast by a bulldozer under the blasting of the loudspeakers.

"We need a crane," said Gabel over the speaker. A head out in the surf looked through the rain with a startled expression.

"Get one of those LSMs coming in."

"You. Wave in the LCVP."

Then, and all the time, came shivering, thumping explosions. Men were running, scattering, frantic for cover. There would be a cloud of dirt, spray and pieces of a tractor going 50 feet into the air. The whine of sniper fire rang along the beach and inland toward the airstrip. Among the Coast Guard-manned LSTs along the shore, fountains of spray would go up. Other landing craft would be hit. Mortar fire went on.

Seabees ... everyone ran for cover. It was hell to keep on working out there under fire. But it was work that had to be done. Everybody was scared. They wanted to crawl, burrow, wriggle down into the earth. It took iron will not to do that.

But the loudspeaker, inspired by either Hebert or Gable never stopped. It went right on through storm, fire and hell. They both stood out in the open talking into their phones.

"Comfortable lying out there, isn't it, boys?" said Hebert.

"Yeah," continued Gabel roughly. "They're getting that all the time up in the front lines ... About every five minutes, or maybe five every minute. They get machine-gun fire up there, too, and artillery."

Everyone soon was back on the job. So were the Japanese mortars.

It wasn't so much how this ship-to-shore, shore-to-ship system worked out under the gigantic handicaps. It was a miracle that it worked at all. But the real miracles were made by men who didn't seem to know the meaning of failure. They were made by the 23rd Regiment of the 4thMarDiv and the Navy salvage and beach parties at Iwo. 🇺🇸

necked or gone into the wrong beach. There was a definite beach for every boat to hit. Often it was vital that the correct beach be hit.

"LVT. LVT. Are you empty?"

A signalman waved yes.

"Stay right where you are. Stand by to evacuate casualties."

The LVT stood by. It waited for the signalman ashore, standing at the beach commander's elbow, to wave him into the beach. The LCVT got the signal and churned in to the beach. The loudspeaker

blared again, making Lt Gabel's whisper thunder.

"Report down here. Right down here to evacuate casualties."

Lt Hebert: "All right there, get on the ball. Wave the LCM off! We can't take any more small boats on this beach at this time. Is that LST unloaded yet?"

"Number 728, have you got rockets on you?"

The beach area was more crowded than 42nd Street at Broadway or Sunset and Vine in Hollywood, except for the constant

USMC

The view of Mount Suribachi from the sea in the opening days of the battle of Iwo Jima in late February 1945.



From the *Leatherneck* Archives: May 1945

# HOT ROCK

## The Fight for Mount Suribachi

Story by Sgt Bill Miller, USMC • Photos by Sgt Louis Lowery, USMC

The Marines called the volcano Suribachi Yama “Hot Rock.” It was to be even hotter than anyone expected. Our amtracs still were circling when word came that the first assault wave had landed shortly after 9 a.m.

Our wave was the eighth, leading the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Marine Division’s 28th Marines, who were to take Suribachi. Ahead of us was the 1st Bn, which was to drive across the narrow isthmus at the foot of Hot Rock, cutting off the rest of the island. We were to swing left just inland.

The assault on the volcano was to begin as soon as the 1st Bn secured the line across the island. Our 3rd Bn was in reserve, landing shortly after noon, but it was to have an equal share in the battle. The rest of the 5th Division, the 4th Division and, later, the 3rd Division, landed further up the east beach, pushed inland across the south airfield and swung north in the main drive toward Moto Yama airfield.

First wave ashore was armored amtracs with 75s, but they were unable to climb the first steep, 10-foot ledge in the loose, volcanic sand. So it was the infantry, with hand weapons, who made the assault. From the beach to the top of the ridge, the Marines had to climb a series of three ledges. It was hard going in the loose sand and the men were heavily loaded.

The Japanese were ready, their mortars trained on the beach and laying a murderous crossfire on the bare, 150-yard slope which the Marines had to climb before they reached the first fortified positions. In the first wave of assault troops were two platoons of Company B and two of Co C, 1st Bn. Sergeant Robert N. Landman of the second platoon, Co B, was one of the first men to hit the beach.

"I got out of the boat and took the third squad up onto the second terrace," Landman said. "Looking back, I could see the other two squads of my platoon still on the first terrace, pinned down. When I got up to move ahead, the trigger group of my M1 was missing. I had to wait until one of my men was wounded before I could get another M1, but that wasn't a long wait.

"The other two squads were closer when we hit the third terrace. By then, after going about 150 yards, only five men were left of the third squad. Corporal Gerald L. Moore took over what was left of the squad, which kept going until it ran up against a big Japanese pillbox.

"One of our machine gunners was hit and another man was killed. When Moore reached the wounded machine gunner, the corporal came face to face with a Japanese. The Japanese shot him in the chest, the bullet going through his breast muscle. Moore killed the Japanese and stayed in action until D+3, when he was shot through the toe and was ordered to be evacuated.

"That was a hot spot, but we kept together what was left of the third squad, and with Platoon Sergeant James Sutfin went on to the west beach and tied in with two other groups which got across about the same time. That was about 10:30, or 90 minutes after we landed."

Meanwhile, the first platoon, Co B, under Lieutenant Frank J. Wright, was moving along the flank toward Suribachi.



**Marines take cover on the black sands of Iwo Jima during the ferocious battle for control of the island in February, 1945.**

The lieutenant and six men of his platoon made it across the isthmus in 90 minutes.

"Our casualties were heavy," Lt Wright says. "We blew some of the pillboxes we encountered. The others we bypassed. There were six men with me, the rest of the platoon following as closely as they could.

"We would move up, the machine gunners covering us. Then the machine gunners would move up with us. Then we would go again, with them covering. We made it in about 90 minutes. Bates, (Lt Wesley C. Bates, leading the second platoon, Co C) with more men, practically was abreast on the right."

Co C hit a Japanese 20 mm dual-purpose gun position just after these Japanese gunners had shot down one of our planes. There were about 10 Japanese inside. Sgt Thornburn Thostenson and a corporal whose name cannot be published until his family has been told of his death attacked it. Marines got three or four of their

grenades inside the pillbox, as well as a demolition charge, which did not explode.

The grenades silenced the Japanese and the corporal went inside the pillbox to mop up. When he came out his bayonet was bloody. No one knows how many Japanese he had to kill. He moved over to the right and was on top of another bunker, trying to blow it up, when he was shot from still another bunker.

Thostenson, who attacked the pillbox with the corporal, was unhurt, but a bullet went through his pack. With the first units of companies B and C to cross the island was Plt Sgt Dominic Santello of Co A and his machine-gun squad. All of these groups joined forces and set up a perimeter of defense overlooking the west beach. Lt Bates went back to gather up the rest of his platoon and lead them through.

Elements of all platoons in Co C moved across by a sort of shuttle system with Gunnery Sergeant Harry L. Mowery in the center of the island as coordinator.

**The grenades silenced the Japanese and the corporal went inside the pillbox to mop up. When he came out, his bayonet was bloody. No one knows how many Japanese he had to kill.**

**“We ran into four or five Japanese bunkers, with Japanese firing on all sides of us. The platoon leader was in a Y-trench between two bunkers. He had thrown grenades and emptied his carbine into one of the pillboxes.”—Plt Sgt William A. Turner**

**One of the jobs of the scout snipers was to probe areas where the enemy was hidden. Grenades and flame throwers were used to “clean out” the numerous caves and tunnels that the Japanese used throughout the island.**

He had contact with the platoons on the west beach and with the battalion CP, and relayed word from one to the other. There were no direct communications in operation then.

Co C’s commander was wounded on the second terrace, shot through the left leg, and Captain Harold E. Rice took command. Mowery worked like a horse, getting troops across, sending back word for the engineers to blow Japanese pillboxes. Sgt Martin J. Queeney, demolitions sergeant, was in the thick of everything and was a great inspiration to the other men of Co C.

When the tanks finally got up the hill, enabling the 2nd Bn to launch the attack on Suribachi late in the afternoon, Private First Class Leonard J. Allnutt of Co C guided them into the line. Allnutt blew up several Japanese blockhouses himself.

**M**eantime, the Japanese were resisting the 1st Bn fiercely as Co B moved up on the open left flank and Co A tried to move into position, holding that flank until the 2nd Bn came up. About halfway across, Co B and part of Co A hit some of the strongest Japanese positions. Stories of this action conflict in some minor details, but they give a clear

picture of the close fighting in the area. The captain commanding Co B was wounded fatally and a platoon leader hit. Plt Sgt William A. Turner, who was there said:

“The captain led Co B up on the left flank. One squad leader and several men were hit. The third platoon leader and Sgt William W. Woods were with the lead squad, forward. I was two squads back. By the time we had gone 200 yards we had lost 10 men, and the others were all pinned down.

“We ran into four or five Japanese bunkers, with Japanese firing on all sides of us. The platoon leader was in a



**Above: The Japanese had built gun emplacements on Iwo Jima that withstood heavy bombing and shelling by naval gunfire. Marine demolitions men were called in to finish the job.**



**The Marines advanced slowly. The tanks moved up ahead to put the pillboxes under fire and helped the 28th Marines neutralize some of the Japanese defenses.**

Y-trench between two bunkers. He had thrown grenades and emptied his carbine into one of the pillboxes, with Sgt Woods trying to cover him. There were about 50 Japanese all around. The captain moved down into the trench to help and was standing the Japanese off with his pistol.

"The Japanese threw grenades at the platoon leader, wounding him. The captain stood up and was hit in the neck, the bullet coming out his cheek and jaw. (Later, he died of his wound after he had been evacuated to a hospital ship.)

"Woods' weapon was jammed. Cpl Tommy Morgan was out of grenades.



**The wounded are tended to on the beaches of Iwo Jima in February 1945. In one of the costliest battles in the history of the Marine Corps, more than 19,000 Marines were wounded.**

Everything was pretty well mixed up. We couldn't get the captain out. The Japanese were all around, trying to surround us, and we had to keep moving all the time.

"We tried to set up a machine gun, but the gunner was shot before he could get ammunition up to the gun. That whole area was hot D-day and on D+1. It was more than halfway across. We could see the west beach. We were getting grenades and fire from the pillboxes. The 2nd Bn hit six pillboxes there the next day when they attacked toward Suribachi."

All units were disorganized to some extent, and there was a lot of the usual confusion on D-day. Isolated groups were pinned down by heavy crossfire throughout the 28th Marines' zone of action, and it was hard to establish contact. But there were men who stood up and walked across Iwo as if they owned it, and their courage kept things going.

Capt Aaron Gove Wilkins of Co A was the only company commander left in the 1st Bn after the push across the island. His company swung into line on the left flank,

covering about half the distance across the island. It pulled out when the 2nd Bn swung into line and it moved over behind Co B, with Co C on the west coast, where the first defense perimeter was set up.

Cpl Tony Stein, armed with a machine gun, provided enough firepower by himself to enable the second platoon of Co A to move into position from the left flank on the beach to join Co B. Stein's gun was shot out of his hands while he was firing it on the line the second night.

A platoon leader of Co A was killed on

the beach, 15 minutes after he landed. As he stood up, shouting encouragement to his men, he led them up the hill.

"You'd better get the hell up here if you want to win this war," the lieutenant shouted. And then he was killed.

Sgt Merritt M. Savage, platoon guide, took over one of Co A's platoons when the leader was lost. He led them into three hot fire fights and fired tracers to guide the fire of tanks and the regimental weapons company into enemy positions. Savage, Stein and Cpl Frederick J. Tabert went into every Japanese blockhouse and pillbox they encountered without hesitation.

Capt Wilkins' radio operator was hit on the beach as he landed. The radio operator was hit so badly that later, his foot was amputated. He lay on the beach, set up his radio and relayed information from the companies to the battalion until he finally passed out. For an hour and a half, his was the only radio in operation on the beach.

Co D was in the leading wave of the 2nd Bn. Both mortar and small arms fire was heavy. Confusion and lack of contact on the beach made it difficult for Co D to relieve Co A on the line. Co F also had difficulty moving into position. It took a long time to bring the tanks around, and it was some time before the attack on Suribachi got underway.

**The radio operator was hit so badly that later his foot was amputated. He lay on the beach, set up his radio and relayed information from the companies to the battalion until he finally passed out.**

**T**he Japanese were firing from the mountain and from the network of pillboxes, bunkers and trenches circling the base of Suribachi. The Marines advanced slowly. The tanks moved up ahead to put the pillboxes under fire. The attack was halted at 6 p.m., and defenses were secured for the night. Ammunition was low and casualties had been heavy. Evacuation of wounded continued to be a problem until the next day when amtracs came up to help. Some of the wounded lay in the lines all that night and part of the next day.

Flares kept the Japanese in their holes that night, and naval guns kept hammering away at the mountain. An air strike preceded the attack next morning, but the going was slow and naval gunfire missions were called frequently. Artillery had been landed to help blast Japanese positions. Most of the big guns on the

mountain had been knocked out, but as long as the Japanese held it, they could observe every move the Marines made. Later engineers found and cut a 1 1/2-inch communications cable running from the mountain to the other end of the island.

Platoons and companies were shifted continually in the lines, but in general the 2nd Bn moved up on the left with the 3rd Battalion in the center and on most of the right.

The attack on D+2 was delayed until 8:40 a.m. by an air strike. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions were abreast an hour later, and tanks were blasting pill boxes in the green fringe at the base of the mountain, knocking them out one by one. Co D was getting heavy fire from a cave on the left, and the 37s blasted it. By 12:15 p.m. Co D's left flank was on the beach where the sand meets the rocks. There the Japanese had placed some of their biggest

# IWO JIMA

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**The 28th Marines fought for four days along the base of Mount Suribachi. On the morning of D+4 a three-man patrol reached the summit.**



coastal defense guns, but only machine guns and snipers were left now. These Japanese were in the caves, many of which were blasted and sealed by the 2nd Bn on Suribachi's left shoulder.

Artillery was firing on pinpoint targets ahead of the troops. LVTs were used to bring up demolitions, flame throwers, grenades and other supplies. By 2:05 p.m. the tanks had gone as far as they could and sent word they would support the troops from where they were.

On the afternoon of D+2, units of the 1st and 2nd Bns started the big drive to clean out the final Japanese bivouac area. This was the worst pocket of enemy resistance on the way to the mountain, with some of the heaviest fortifications ever encountered in the Pacific. Besides the other defenses, there were nearly 30 big caves in the area, all interconnected. One of these was sealed with 100 Japanese inside. The last Japanese CP on the south end of Iwo was taken here.

About 4 a.m. the next day, the Japanese started a strong counterattack, charging the Marine lines after coming up in back

of the caves where they were entrenched. They kept infiltrating, massing on the right flank and in the center. A mortar barrage laid down by the 1st Bn is credited with breaking up the Japanese attack. The Japanese were using all the artillery they had left on Suribachi and the cliff below.

**C**apt Carl O. Bachman, commanding Co H, tells how one of our gunboats was called in to fire 40 mm guns parallel with the Marine lines, about 75 yards ahead. It was a long chance, but it worked, holding the Japanese off until dawn, when it was possible to get tanks in and neutralize the rest of the Japanese positions.

Next day, D+3, Capt Robert B. Carney Jr., and his executive officer, First Lieutenant Parker H. Stortz, led the first and second platoons of Co G out to the tip of the island, around the right flank of Suribachi.

"As we advanced," said Capt Carney, "we called for naval gunfire [40 mm] on the west side of Suribachi. We got caught in the naval barrage, but only one man was injured, and we had it knocked off.

We finally reached the narrows and took over from A Company on the right. A Company was ordered to withdraw."

Caves were encountered all the way out, but the company left men to watch them and kept going. The Japanese were holed up, but they kept popping out, throwing grenades and firing small arms.

After reaching the tip of the island, Co G pulled back to where its communications ran out and was ordered back to its original positions, where it had begun the attack that morning. Two platoons of Co B were assigned to organize the right flank and positions were set up for what turned out to be a quiet night. Rain had continued all that afternoon, and the men were soaking wet, their weapons in bad shape.

That same day, Co E, in position on the left side of Hot Rock, sent a patrol of 15 men under Sgt Gordon C. Still around the mountain, and contact was made with Co A after Co G had moved back to its original positions.

Back along the west coast, 1stLt Charles A. Weaver led 141 men of Co B in a clean-up of Japanese positions between the south

airfield and the 1st Bn position overlooking the beach.

When I Co hit the base of Suribachi in the center that afternoon, Sgt Robert L. Whitehead climbed up the mountain to the undergrowth just above a huge, demolished coastal gun position. He came back to report no Japanese in evidence and wanted to know if Co I could advance up the mountain. However, it was nearly dark and there were no orders for such an advance that night.

Next day at 8 a.m., D+4, Sgt Sherman B. Watson of Co F led a three-man patrol up the mountain. They went almost to the top, looking over the edge of the crater, and came back to lead the first large patrol to the peak. Other men in the first patrol were PFCs George B. Mercer, Ted J. White and Louis C. Charlo.

Lt Harold G. Schrier, executive officer of "Easy" Company, led a 40-man patrol to the top of Suribachi. Second in command was PltSgt Ernest I. Thomas, who had reorganized his depleted platoon when his leader became a casualty, and, under heavy fire, had directed neutralization of several enemy fortifications at the foot of the mountain.

The patrol took over the desolate peak of Suribachi, raising the first American flag to fly over Iwo Jima from its highest point at 10:30 that morning, Feb. 23, 1945. A piece of Japanese pipe served as the flagpole.

Just as the flag was raised, one of the last Japanese left on the volcano's peak made a desperate attempt to defend it. He hurled a grenade toward the group at the flag, and a moment later came charging out of his cave, brandishing a sword. The Marines cut him down with small arms fire, and he fell over the inner lip of the volcano.

Soon after the flag was raised, Chaplain Charles F. Suver conducted mass on the peak of Suribachi, his altar a pile of rocks.

The 2nd Bn sent more platoons to the top, and Capt Arthur H. Naylor Jr., Co F commander, directed operations as the Marines fanned out around the rim of the crater and climbed down into the crater itself, where the Japanese had a trench and other fortifications. There was scattered resistance, but the actual taking of the mountain was easy compared to the bitter



**Leatherneck combat correspondent, Sgt Louis R. Lowery, accompanied the 40-man patrol climbing Mount Suribachi and took this photo of Marines preparing to raise the first flag atop Mount Suribachi.**

fighting which had gone before.

The battle for Suribachi was not over yet, however. Mopping up continued all day, and when night came all the Japanese in the area came out of their holes. Most of the activity was on the west beach and around the bivouac area where the Japanese had staged their last big counterattack.

Something like 150 Japanese, most of them armed only with hand grenades and demolitions charges, struck into the Marine lines or tried to sneak up along the beach. Most of them apparently were trying to get through to join the larger force at the north end of the island. They were desperate and trying to get food, water and weapons. The 3rd Bn killed 80 Japanese that night, and the 1st Bn counted 32 dead in their area.

Those who tried to slip past the 1st Battalion on the beach were naked, carrying only hand grenades. When machine guns opened fire on them, they came charging into the battalion area. Several were killed

right in the battalion CP. One came dashing through the CP, throwing grenades. He fell down and blew himself to pieces.

They threw probably 100 grenades from the beach at the Marines on the bluff above. PFC Dale Harvis Dixon was throwing most of them back and lost a hand when one exploded before he could return it. The attacks started around 1 a.m. and were worst around 4 a.m.

The mop-up continued for the next few days, with demolitions men and engineers blasting caves, war dogs ferreting out snipers and bulldozers leveling off enemy positions. No one except the Japanese ever will know what some of the underground positions held. Twenty-five Japanese were killed in one cave on D+5.

In the 3rd Bn area alone, engineers buried 154 Japanese. They blew 85 pill-boxes and caves, removed more than 100 mines of various types, and not including saki bottle booby traps, tape measure traps, 88 duds and 220 grenades. All of that was in an area 850 yards long and 400 yards wide, and the job was still unfinished, while demolitions men probably accounted for as much.

After a few days of mopping up, reorganizing and resupplying, the regiment moved up to the line on the north. The battle for Iwo Jima was still far from finished, but Hot Rock had been cooled.

**Just as the flag was raised, one of the last Japanese left on the volcano's peak made a desperate attempt to defend it. He hurled a grenade toward the group at the flag, and a moment later came charging out of his cave, brandishing a sword.**

## First SNCO Completes Blended EWS Program

The Marine Corps offers many training and education programs. Some are required at certain ranks or grades for promotion and retention, and others are designed for Marines to improve themselves.

Gunnery Sergeant Daniel Best, the Marine Security Guard detachment commander for the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, Colombia, went above and beyond in improving himself as a Marine when he became the first enlisted student to graduate from Marine Corps University's Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS) Blended Seminar Program at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 13, 2019.

"My goal is to expand my horizons, and this course is supposed to teach you the [Marine air-ground task force] in more

detail," said Best. "I want to use this and help influence decisions in operational planning."

The six-month course is made up of four weeks of resident training, then 13 weeks of virtual, internet-based training, followed by six more weeks of resident training. During the entire course, the students are working with each other to solve problems.

In a course designed for senior captains, Best's enlisted rank and experience set him apart.

"[Best] is a glass ceiling breaker, he's a groundbreaker," said retired colonel Willard Buhl, an instructor for the EWS blended seminar. "He's the first staff NCO we've had in the Blended Seminar Program. I think he lends a great dimension to the class because he brings a mature senior enlisted experience to the room."

It was a bit of a long road for Best to get into the program. The course has been open to enlisted Marines for some time, but officers, for whom the course is designed, have priority when enrolling. After spending eight months on a waiting list, Best was accepted into the class and became the first enlisted Marine to enroll in June 2019.

Best did not realize he was the only enlisted Marine in the program until he arrived at Camp Pendleton to start the course. Once he learned of his distinction as the first, he wanted to set a good example for the enlisted Marines who would follow in his footsteps. According to Buhl, Best was a standout in class, and the commissioned officers often looked to him to learn from his experience.

"They haven't had the diverse experiences that the gunnery sergeant has had, and they haven't had the leadership opportunities he's had," explained Buhl. "So he not only provides that enlisted perspective to them, but he provides a bit more experience with it. It's powerful."

Best joined the Marine Corps in August 2004, a month after he graduated from high school. He enlisted as a financial management specialist, but took advantage of an opportunity to move into supply during Marine Combat Training.

"Supply is such a larger military occupational specialty than financial management," explained Best. "I've been able to do a lot of other things in the Marine Corps because my job allows me to."

Throughout his time in the Marine Corps, Best has branched out into different areas to become as well rounded as possible. He's a third-degree Marine Corps Martial Arts instructor and a combat marksmanship instructor. While building his Marine Corps career, he also is working on earning his master's degree.

"Someone told me knowledge equals access and access equals influence," said Best.

Now that he's a graduate of EWS, Best is looking forward to passing on his new knowledge and experience to the Marines he leads.

"Trying to increase my knowledge showed people here that I wasn't trying to make this a check in the box," said Best. "This is not a requirement for me to be here, I am here to make myself better for my Marines."

LCpl Andrew Cortez, USMC



LCPL ANDREW CORTÉZ, USMC

**GySgt Daniel Best, the MSG detachment commander for the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, Colombia, plots points on a map during the EWS Blended Seminar Program at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 11, 2019. Best was the first enlisted Marine to graduate from the program.**

## Wounded Warriors Demonstrate Training for British Army

Wounded Warrior Battalion-East conducted an exchange of ideas with allied partners from the British Army to enhance the recovery and rehabilitation of ill and injured servicemembers at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., Oct. 21-24, 2019. Events were held each day for recovering servicemembers, both active-duty and veteran, that showcased their abilities and discipline.

"These events are for our allied partners from the British Army to experience what our servicemembers go through as far as their physical and psychological recovery," said Brandon Shephard, the Warrior Athlete Reconditioning Program manager. "We want to show them how we take care of our most [catastrophically injured] servicemembers when it comes to their physical and psychological needs. We want to share the best practices with them."

WWBn-E and its West Coast counterpart, Wounded Warrior Battalion-West, provide continuous, far-reaching support to wounded, ill and injured Marines and designated Sailors in order to ensure that all recovering servicemembers successfully transition back to full duty or to civilian life.

Exercises such as shooting air rifles, indoor cycling and archery were new



CPL KARINA LOPEZMATA, USMC

**Julie Clark, an archery coach with the Warrior Athlete Reconditioning Program, center, assists a British soldier with building an archery bow during an event hosted by WWBn-E at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., Oct. 23, 2019.**

activities introduced to the British soldiers to improve athletic capabilities during recovery.

"When you become ill or wounded, you don't realize what is available to you," said British Warrant Officer 2 Julia Venning, a recovering soldier. "It is wonderful for us to come out to different countries and

see the differences between our programs and the American programs."

According to Shepard, these events give the servicemembers the opportunity to showcase the hard work and dedication they put into their own recovery.

"We share victories out in the battlefield," Shepard said. "We might as well



CPL KARINA LOPEZMATA, USMC

**U.S. Marines with WWBn-E and recovering soldiers with the British Army retrieve arrows from their targets at the archery range at MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., Oct. 23, 2019. The battalion's Marines exchanged ideas and practices for wounded warrior care with their British Army counterparts during various events over a four-day period.**

share our victories in the recovery of those injuries.”

At WWBn-E, certified athletic trainers and strength coaches are available to assist the wounded and injured warriors in establishing exercise goals and routines to best suit their recoveries. With a number of Marines and Sailors across the U.S. on the mend from wounds, illness and injuries, it is important for them to understand there are services that will assist them to get back into the fight.

“Even though we are from different countries and wear different uniforms, it is nice to see we still serve alongside each other and are considered as one,” Venning said.

Cpl Karina Lopezmata, USMC

### Camp Pendleton Uses UAS For Annual Wildlife Survey

Working with the base game warden, Marines with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment launched an RQ-20 Puma unmanned aircraft system as part of Operation Buck Rogers on Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 3, 2019.

Operation Buck Rogers is an annual survey of the wildlife on base—specifically the mule deer population.

“We used to do this survey by helicopter, and it’s expensive and it is hazardous,” said Michael Tucker, a game warden with MCB Camp Pendleton. “The leading cause of death for wildlife biologists is low-elevation helicopter surveys. Camp Pendleton is pioneering a way where we

can use [unmanned aerial vehicles] to count the deer so we don’t have to get in a helicopter and fly these low-elevation surveys.”

Prior to using the RQ-20 Puma, helicopters would fly precariously close to the ground, making it difficult for the pilots to safely navigate the land and potential obstacles. To decrease the challenges of conducting wildlife analyses, officials have been thinking about new ways to complete these surveys safely.

“This is important because in the western United States, mule deer are on the decline, so we see fewer and fewer of them every year,” said Tucker. “They are an important species. They manage the vegetation, they’re part of the food web, they’re the primary source of food for mountain lions.”

The ecosystem on Camp Pendleton is monitored and maintained by the game wardens. With the various natural disasters and rigorous training that occur on Camp Pendleton, it is essential to keep track of the wildlife over the years. Game wardens have to ensure the wildlife is not negatively affected.

Along with counting the wildlife, Operations Buck Rogers involved a scenario in which a Marine was lost in the field and the RQ-20 Puma was used to search for the Marine. The scenario was successful and the Marine was found.

“The role of the lost Marine was to simulate a scenario that we’ve had at least a couple of times aboard the base,”

said Major Julio Gonzalez, the regional airspace coordinator and air traffic control training and readiness officer with Marine Corps Installations West, MCB Camp Pendleton. “Marines are moving in the field, they’re doing combat readiness exercises, and folks get separated, just like they do in real life.”

Gonzalez was pleased with the outcome of Operation Buck Rogers.

“We are paving the way to do things like counting deer, finding lost Marines, in a way that is faster, cheaper and safer,” he said.

LCpl Alison Dostie, USMC

### Newly Minted Marines Step In To Aid Local Police

After enduring 13 weeks of transformative and demanding training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., two new Marines from Lexington, S.C., had their newly acquired skills and training put to the test on Oct. 30, 2019, in a way that they had not expected.

Privates First Class Noah Jordan and Caleb Montgomery had just pulled up to their local recruiting substation to assist with evening physical training when they heard a commotion from across the parking lot of the local Best Buy.

“We could just hear yelling at first, and we looked over and saw the police chasing after a suspect fleeing from the Best Buy,” said Montgomery.

The suspected had attempted credit card fraud and fled the scene. The new Marines immediately assessed the situation and took action.

“I looked at Montgomery and said, ‘We’re going to do this,’ then ran,” said Jordan.

The pair took off in the direction of the suspect, running straight for him and cutting off his escape route.

“The suspect tripped over himself when we ran up to him, and when he looked up at two Marines blocking his path, he gave up trying to get away,” explained Montgomery.

Patrolman First Class William Norris of the Lexington Police Department smiled while recalling the Marines’ actions.

“In my years as a police officer, I have only seen it a couple times where a bystander has intervened to help the police,” said Norris. “Typically, people will stand by and pull out their phones to record the encounter, so it felt really motivating to see somebody actually take action and help us catch them.”

The pair attributed their decisiveness to training from their drill instructors at Parris Island and their local recruiters at Marine Corps Recruiting Substation Lexington.



LCPL ALISON DOSTIE, USMC

Cpl Michael Misbach, an intelligence specialist with 2/5, launches an RQ-20 Puma during Operation Buck Rodgers at MCB Camp Pendleton, Calif., Dec. 3, 2019. The annual aerial survey of the base’s mule deer population is safer and more cost-effective when conducted using unmanned aircraft systems.



SGT JOSEPH JACOB, USMC

PFCs Noah Jordan and Caleb Montgomery are recognized by two officers from the Lexington, S.C., police department at the local recruiting substation, Oct. 31, 2019. Both Marines had just completed boot camp when they stopped a suspect who was fleeing from two police officers.

"It was definitely a positive surprise when the police came up to the station after the incident to tell us what these young men had done," explained Staff Sergeant Ty Fletcher, the staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge of RSS Lexington. "We spend a lot of time teaching these young men and women the core values of the

Marine Corps, so when we get to see them come back from boot camp and put those values into action, it is highly rewarding for us as recruiters."

The following day, on Oct. 31, representatives from the Lexington Police Department came to RSS Lexington to present the two Marines with a letter of

appreciation for their part in stopping the fleeing suspect.

Montgomery and Jordan were scheduled to report to the School of Infantry at Camp Lejeune, N.C., following their 10 days of post-recruit training leave.

Sgt Joseph Jacob, USMC



## Crazy Caption Contest

### Winner



CPL NELSON DUENAS, USMC

"Listen up Marines. I will now turn you over to Gunny Claus for your cold-weather training brief."

Submitted by:  
GySgt Mark McKie, USMC (Ret)  
Williamsburg, Va.

### This Month's Photo



LCPL KARIS MATTINGLY, USMC

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

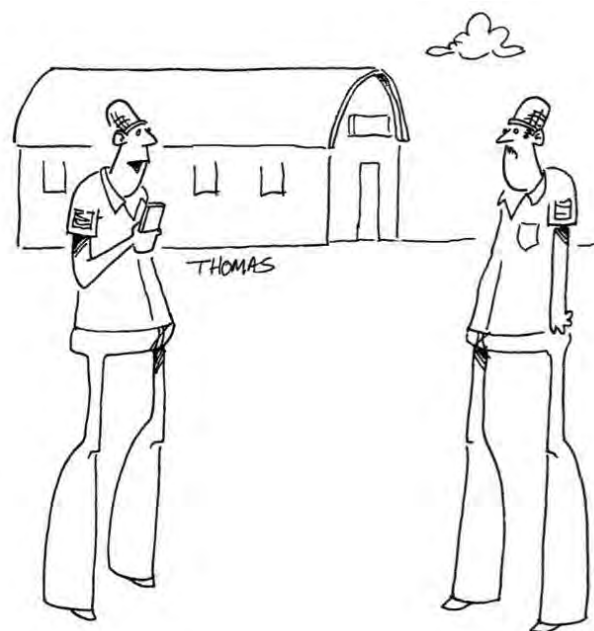
City/State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

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

# Leatherneck Laffs



"Johnson, you only had to take off your gas mask."



"I got a 10-mile hike order followed by a crying emoji."



"Hang on, corporal. I don't think we actually lost your orders stateside."



"Call my phone."



"Rifle? But I'm more accurate with a joystick."



"Private, you would know we're at war if you would turn down the volume on your smartphone."

A bus with the former Iranian hostages and their families aboard prepares to leave Andrews Air Force Base, Md., bound for Washington, D.C., in January 1981 following the release of the hostages.



# ONE OF 52

Marine Sgt Rocky Sickmann,  
Held Hostage in Iran, Recalls 444 Days  
in Captivity



COURTESY OF SOLDIERS MEMORIAL MILITARY MUSEUM



COURTESY OF ROCKY SICKMANN

A POW bracelet, pictured to the left, bearing the name of Marine Sgt Rocky Sickmann, pictured above, is on display at Soldiers Memorial Military Museum in St. Louis, Mo. Bracelets like this one were worn during the Iran Hostage Crisis to remember the 52 Americans who were held captive.



Above: Iranian students protest American involvement in Iran near the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, Iran, Nov. 6, 1979, where staffers were being held hostage after the embassy was seized two days prior.



Above: Prior to his assignment to the U.S. Embassy in Tehran in 1979, Sickmann, pictured here in 1977 at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan, served with 3rd Marine Division.

WHILE SICKMANN HAD BEEN UNABLE TO SEE THE WORLD AROUND HIM DURING THOSE LONG, ARDUOUS MONTHS, THE EYES OF THE WORLD HAD BEEN ON HIM.

By Sara W. Bock

**T**he distinct rumble of a jet engine on Jan. 20, 1981 was the first indication to Marine Sergeant Rodney V. “Rocky” Sickmann that something might be different about this particular movement within Iran.

For the past 444 days, he’d learned to rely on his sense of hearing to gather information.

The thick, white cloth that had been forced over his eyes whenever he was escorted from the small room he shared

with fellow Marine Sgt William “Billy” Gallegos and American businessman Jerry Plotkin prevented him from visually surveying his surroundings. But while Sickmann had been unable to see the world around him during those long, arduous months, the eyes of the world had been on him. Appearing in newspapers around the globe, riveting photographs of American hostages, blindfolded with their hands bound, offered a tiny glimpse of what life was like for the 52 Americans who were inside the U.S. Embassy in Tehran on Nov. 4, 1979, when it was seized by protestors.

When the vehicle that he had been forced into earlier in the day halted to a stop and one of his Iranian captors removed his blindfold, Sickmann knew his intuition had been correct.

He blinked, allowing his eyes to adjust—and there it was: the airplane that would soon transport him and his fellow hostages to Wiesbaden Air Base in Germany and then home to the United States.

The U.S. government finally had secured the release of the hostages, who 14 months earlier were thrown into a major international crisis when a mob of



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

**Former Iranian hostages and their families disembark upon their arrival at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., in January 1981. The hostages had been reunited with either their spouses, if married, or their parents, if unmarried, at United States Military Academy West Point in New York prior to their arrival at Andrews, where the rest of their family members waited anxiously to greet them.**

zealous student protestors, dreaming of an Iran eradicated of Western influence and backed by Iran's newly empowered religious leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, blatantly violated international law and stormed the sprawling 27-acre embassy compound.

The timing of the hostages' release—on the day of Ronald Reagan's inauguration as President of the United States, just minutes after his inaugural address—was an intentional message to his predecessor, President Jimmy Carter, who had worked tirelessly, but to no avail, to secure their freedom. The Iranian people deeply resented Carter for his support of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, the authoritarian monarch who fled Iran in January 1979.

After the shah was permitted to enter the U.S. to undergo cancer treatments in October 1979, the Iranians' hatred grew. Khomeini demanded that the American government return the shah to Iran so he could be put on trial, and when the U.S. refused, the seizure of the embassy was a brazen act of retaliation.

**F**or 444 days, Sickmann wondered if he'd ever make it home to the small town of Krakow, Mo., where his parents, four siblings and girlfriend Jill were waiting anxiously for his safe return.

"This is something that you've prayed for, you've cried for, you've hoped for the opportunity," said Sickmann of his release, adding that aside from Gallegos and Plotkin, he hadn't seen or heard about

any of the other hostages since they were captured more than a year earlier. Their captors had withheld information about what was going on both inside and outside the walls of the embassy. Sickmann didn't even know if the others were still in Iran, or if they'd also been held in the embassy, or if they were even still alive. He also was unaware that the 14 people who had been among the 66 original hostages were released on Nov. 19 and 20, 1979, making Sickmann one of 52 Americans who endured the entirety of what history has termed "the Iran Hostage Crisis."

But as joyful as that moment of realization should have been, after more than 14 months of "mind games" and subjection to mock firing squads, Russian roulette and physical abuse, Sickmann didn't really feel anything at all. The spitting and now-familiar chants of "Death to America" that he and the others endured as they were removed from the vehicles and allowed to board the aircraft did nothing to calm his anxiety.

"We're on the airplane, there are 52 hostages, but nobody's saying a word. Nobody's excited. You're free, but you're not excited. You're on that airplane in shock," recalled Sickmann. "Here you are, looking at people that you haven't seen for 444 days. You look bad, you smell bad and you're in shock. You have no idea what's going on."

The pilot accelerated down the runway before bringing the aircraft to an idle.

"We thought this was them wanting to screw with us one last time," said Sickmann. "But it wasn't that. What they wanted to do was humiliate President Carter."

He still recalls the sights, sounds and emotions of that day—and every other day in captivity—in vivid detail more than 40 years after the embassy was taken. On Nov. 4, 2019, the 40th anniversary of the day they were first held captive, Sickmann and other hostages spent the day in Washington, D.C., as guests of the White House, where they were honored for their courage and sacrifice. The following day, Nov. 5, Sickmann shared his story with *Leatherneck*.

He describes the small detachment of Marines at the embassy, nearly all of whom were new to Tehran. Earlier in 1979, the embassy had been closed for a short period of time after it barely survived an attack by Iranian revolutionaries and subsequently had seen a significant turnover in its staffing. Sickmann and Gallegos were assigned as embassy security guards, as were Staff Sergeant Michael Moeller, Sergeants Kevin Hermening, Paul Lewis, James Lopez, Gregory Persinger, John McKeel, Ladell Maples, William Quarles and David



COURTESY OF ROCKY SICKMANN

Above: Sickmann, left, and fellow leathernecks assigned to 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment are pictured here during a “float” in the Pacific in 1977.

Right: A section of the “St. Louis in Service” exhibit at the Soldiers Memorial Military Museum in St. Louis, Mo., features Sickmann, and includes a banner that hung from the control tower at Lambert Airport to welcome him home, as well as excerpts of the diary he kept during his 444 days as a hostage. (Photo courtesy of Soldiers Memorial Military Museum)



“WE’RE ON THE AIRPLANE, THERE ARE 52 HOSTAGES, BUT NOBODY’S SAYING A WORD. NOBODY’S EXCITED. YOU’RE FREE, BUT YOU’RE NOT EXCITED. YOU’RE ON THAT AIRPLANE IN SHOCK,” RECALLED SICKMANN.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

The 52 hostages arrive at Rhein-Main Air Base in Germany after their release in January 1981.



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Sickmann is embraced by his sisters Judy and Debbie at Andrews AFB, Md., in January 1981.

Walker, and Corporals Steven Kirtley and Wesley Williams. Unbeknownst to the others, Maples, Quarles, Walker and Williams were freed later in November with the other African-American hostages; the remaining nine Marines endured more than a year of captivity.

The morning of Nov. 4, 1979, Sickmann, who had arrived in Tehran just 29 days earlier, was walking through the embassy's motor pool gate when he heard a startling message crackle over his walkie-talkie: "Recall! Recall!"

Sickmann made it to the door of the main chancery building just as Gallegos was starting to close it. He looked over at the front gate and an eerie feeling washed over him as he noted the absence of the Iranian guards that normally provided security.

He slipped through the door just as hordes of Iranian students began to scale the embassy walls and force open the gates.

For three hours, wearing gas masks and armed with sawed-off shotguns, Sickmann and a handful of other Marines attempted to hold off the mob from inside the chancery. But with orders to stand

**DURING THOSE LONG HOURS, DAYS, WEEKS, AND MONTHS, SICKMANN FOUND COMFORT IN CONJURING UP THE DEAREST MEMORIES OF HIS CHILDHOOD AND MENTALLY SAVORING HIS MOTHER'S HOME-COOKED MEALS.**



COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES

A group of the Marines who had been hostages arrive in New Orleans in March 1981 as guests of the city's Mardi Gras festivities organizers.

down—"We're going to get this solved with diplomacy and it's going to take 18 hours" was the message from Washington, said Sickmann—they never fired a shot. Meanwhile, State Department officials hurriedly worked to destroy classified documents inside the embassy in preparation for the inevitable.

"They finally broke through the bars of the window in the basement," recalled Sickmann. "And who did they bring first but Iranian women in black chadors, knowing the mindset that we as military would not shoot innocent women."

Sickmann recalls the adrenaline-pumping action as he and the other Marines who were with him cleared up to the very top of the embassy and barricaded themselves in. He'd been trained to guard the embassy, but never to protect it against the government of an entire country.

"What they started doing was bringing [American] people that hadn't made it into the chancery, and they put them on the other side of the door and put a pistol to their head, and they were begging for their life," said Sickmann.

During his first 30 days in captivity, Sickmann sat tied to a chair, allowed up



**Sgt John D. McKeel Jr. waves to guests as he and other former hostages are introduced at the Bacchus Ball in New Orleans in March 1981. Sickmann is the Marine pictured on the far right.**

COURTESY OF NATIONAL ARCHIVES



LEATHERNECK FILE PHOTO

**The Marines who had been held hostage listen to remarks from BGen George Bartlett, USMC (Ret), then-executive director of the Marine Corps Association, before Col J.L. Cooper, MSG Bn CO, presents them with bound volumes of *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Leatherneck*. The magazines covered Marine Corps news during the months the MSG Marines were held in captivity.**

only to occasionally use the restroom and eat. He describes the anguish, frustration and hatred that plagued his mind day in and day out.

“Your mind is just racing and it’s going through so many different situations,” said Sickmann. “On Nov. 4, 1979, 52 Americans were stripped of their freedom, their dignity and their pride.”

A “See the World, Join the Marines” recruiting campaign with a photograph of a Marine standing in front of an American embassy first attracted young Sickmann to the Corps three years earlier in 1976. He viewed the Marines as a ticket out of small-town Missouri and a chance to follow in the footsteps of his father, who served in the Army during World War II. His parents, devout Catholics, taught him the “love of family, love of faith and love of country,” he said.

The reality he was living as a hostage, however, was a far cry from what he had

envisioned when he graduated from MSG School after spending time in Asia with 3rd Marine Division and later completing a deployment and Mediterranean cruise with 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment.

“You tie someone to a chair for 30 days and deprive them of sleep and food, you put a gun to that person’s head, it will screw with you,” said Sickmann. “I just said, ‘I’m not going to let these people get the best of me,’ and that’s what I strived for. I played a lot.”

**A**fter the first month, he finally was allowed to take a shower and was moved into the room he shared with Gallegos and Plotkin, which contained little more than a thin foam mattress on the floor, providing a minimal amount of comfort.

“You have no privacy. That bar of soap becomes your toothpaste and your finger is your toothbrush and you make do with whatever you have,” said Sickmann, who

added that the discipline, respect and code of conduct he learned in the Marine Corps helped him survive. He and Gallegos channeled their frustration into physical fitness, doing 600 sit-ups and 300 push-ups together daily.

The captors used physical force and mock firing squads, among other techniques, said Sickmann, to try to break the hostages so they would make derogatory statements against the United States. But it was the lack of freedom and autonomy that was perhaps the most dehumanizing of all.

“If you wanted to go to the restroom, you knocked on the door, put your piece of paper under the door to let the guard know,” said Sickmann. “They had complete control of you for 444 days.”

He spent his days dreaming up escape plans, but with locked doors, handcuffs, and no shoes aside from a pair of sandals that were three sizes too small, he never made an attempt, “but the thought was always there,” he recalled.

During those long hours, days, weeks, and months, Sickmann found comfort in conjuring up the dearest memories of his childhood and mentally savoring his mother’s home-cooked meals.

“That first Thanksgiving, I sat there knowing what my parents were doing in Krakow,” said Sickmann. “We didn’t have a lot of money, but [my parents] made it look like the Ritz-Carlton for every holiday. I just sat there and ‘lived’ that. I yearned for it and wanted so much to be back.”

He describes the “wonderful place” he went to in his mind: sitting in the corner of the room eating his mother’s pancakes, fried chicken and casseroles.

“I could remember the bubbling of the pancakes and how she would put the butter on them,” said Sickmann, recalling the vivid details that mentally transported him to a place where he felt safe and free.

On April 25, 1980, Sickmann, Gallegos and Plotkin were handcuffed, blindfolded, photographed and transported to a new location. All of the hostages were dispersed throughout the country to spend the remainder of their captivity in various Iranian prisons and other facilities.

It wasn’t until he was released in 1981 that Sickmann would understand the reason for the abrupt movement: a failed rescue attempt known as Operation Eagle Claw. It was an aborted mission that claimed the lives of eight servicemembers from an all-volunteer Joint Special Op-

erations Group—five airmen and three Marines—when a RH-53D Sea Stallion helicopter collided midair with an EC-130 transport aircraft over Iran’s Great Salt Desert.

**T**he relocations ensured that any future rescue attempts would prove futile.

He notes the significance of Operation Eagle Claw as the impetus for the creation of the U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM), as it brought attention to the inadequacies in the Defense Department’s reactionary capabilities in similar crises.

“The manpower and capabilities that we have now to what we had then [are] completely different,” said Sickmann, noting that the vertical takeoff and landing capabilities of the Marine Corps’ MV-22B Osprey would be ideal for a similar rescue mission.

After he and the other hostages received a hero’s welcome home to the United States with ceremonies on the White House lawn and fanfare as they arrived in their home towns, Sickmann left active duty, settled back in to life in Missouri and asked his girlfriend, Jill, to marry him.



**The members of the USAF 8th Special Operations Squadron who died in a fatal accident during Operation Eagle Claw are pictured in the top row of this undated photo (encircled in red, left to right): Capt Richard L. Bakke, TSgt Joel C. Mayo, Capt Lynn D. McIntosh, Capt Harold L. Lewis, and Capt Charles T. McMillan II. Three Marines were also killed during the failed attempt to rescue the hostages in Tehran.**



**Sickmann delivers a keynote address to a crowd gathered in front of Soldiers Memorial Military Museum for the 36th annual St. Louis Regional Veterans Day Observance Ceremony, Nov. 9, 2019.**

He soon learned that during those harrowing 444 days, his parents had spiritual and emotional support from Father Bob Kincl, a Catholic Navy chaplain he had formed a bond with at Camp Geiger, N.C., prior to his MSG assignment. Father Kincl traveled to Missouri to serve as a liaison for his parents during Sickmann’s captivity and the priest quickly became a special part of the Sickmann family’s life.

Kincl officiated Sickmann’s wedding ceremony in 1981 and at the wedding

ceremonies of both of his daughters decades later, as well as the funeral services for both of Sickmann’s parents when they passed away just months apart. Eight years ago, he performed a vow renewal ceremony for Sickmann and his wife at the Vatican. The chaplain also has taken the Sickmanns’ son on a trip to Israel and most recently spent Thanksgiving Day with the Sickmann family in 2019.

Sickmann has also maintained a close friendship with Gallegos and a number of the other hostages. It’s a bond that



**Just months after returning home to St. Louis in 1981, Sickmann married his longtime girlfriend, Jill, who faithfully waited for his safe return during the entirety of his 444 days in captivity.**

he says was vital to his reintegration following their release and return to the U.S. and continues to be an important part of the healing process after their shared traumatic experience.

“I’m telling you a story, it’s just a story to you, but Billy [Gallegos] remembers the smells, he remembers the sounds, just like I do,” said Sickmann.

After retiring from a sales career with Budweiser in 2016, Sickmann has ded-



COURTESY OF ROCKY SICKMANN

**SICKMANN HAS ALSO MAINTAINED A CLOSE FRIENDSHIP WITH GALLEGOS AND A NUMBER OF THE OTHER HOSTAGES. IT'S A BOND THAT HE SAYS WAS VITAL TO HIS REINTEGRATION FOLLOWING THEIR RELEASE AND RETURN TO THE U.S.**



COURTESY OF ROCKY SICKMANN

**Above: From the left, Neal Katcef, Billy Gallegos, Rocky Sickmann, Ryan Luz and Ronny Jackson visit the White House on Nov. 4, 2019, the 40th anniversary of the day the U.S. Embassy in Tehran was seized. Katcef, Luz and Jackson are close friends of Sickmann and accompanied him and Gallegos during the trip to Washington, D.C.**

**Left: This recent photo of the Sickmann family includes Rocky and Jill, center, their three children, two sons-in-law and four grandchildren.**


icated his time and efforts as a vice president with Folds of Honor, a national nonprofit that provides educational scholarships to spouses and children of America's fallen and disabled servicemembers. The opportunity allows him to leverage his business experience to help grow the organization's foundation, as well as serve as a liaison for its partnership with Anheuser-Busch.

But most of all, he says, his work with the nonprofit group offers him the opportunity to honor the lives of Captain Richard L. Bakke, USAF; Capt Harold L. Lewis, USAF; Capt Lynn D. McIntosh, USAF; Capt Charles T. McMillan II, USAF; Technical Sergeant Joel C. Mayo, USAF; Staff Sergeant Dewey L. Johnson, USMC; Sergeant John D. Harvey, USMC;

and Corporal George N. Holmes Jr., USMC, who in 1980 bravely volunteered for a risky rescue mission—meant to save him and 51 others—and never returned home.

He'll never be able to go a day without recalling the details of his 444 days as a hostage, but, he added, there's another thought that's always at the forefront of his mind.

"Every morning when I wake up, I don't forget about those eight individuals who paid the ultimate sacrifice to try to regain my freedom." 🇺🇸



Marine Cobras provide close air support to 1st LAR, 1stMarDiv in the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

# “SNAKE” TALES:

## Cobra Pilots of HMLA-269 Over An Nasiriyah, Iraq

By Suzanne Pool-Camp

**March 22-23, 2003**

During the “March Up” to Baghdad in March 2003, the 3rd Marine Air Wing (MAW), commanded by Major General James Amos, was tasked with providing air support for Task Force Tarawa (TFT) in the capture of the bridges over the Euphrates River and Saddam Canal at An Nasiriyah. The bridges were important because they led to Route 7, the main road to Baghdad. Intelligence indicated that resistance in the city would be minimal. Major Donald “Scott” Hawkins, forward air controller (FAC) with 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, said he expected, “They were going to greet us



LCPL ANDREW P. ROUFFS, USMC



COURTESY OF COL MICHAEL D. VISCONAGE, USMC

**Above: Cobras similar to this one on USS Saipan (LHA-2) played a crucial role in Task Force Tarawa's success in capturing the bridges near An Nasiriyah.**



COURTESY OF COL CRAIG STREETER, USMC

**Maj Craig Streeter, an AH-1W pilot with HMLA-269, takes a break between sorties near An Nasiriyah during Operation Iraqi Freedom.**

with open arms and give us the keys to the city." Task Force Tarawa crossed the line of departure on March 21. By 1300 on March 22, their lead elements had covered 150 km and were north of Jalibah Airfield. On the morning of March 23, the Task Force's orders had evolved to secure the Highway 1 bridge by 5 a.m. and to be prepared to seize the eastern bridges of Nasiriyah by 1000.

The AH-1W Super Cobra "Snakes" of Marine Air Group (MAG) 29's HMLA-269 were specifically tasked to provide reconnaissance and close air support as the Task Force moved north to seize the bridges. The "Gunrunners," commanded

by Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey Hewlett, included 18 AH-1W Super Cobras, nine UH-1N Hueys and 323 Marines out of Jacksonville, N.C. They were part of the 3rd MAW's MAG-29, commanded by Colonel Robert Milstead.

#### "Snake" Tales

On the afternoon of March 22, Major Craig Streeter, call sign "SB," a pilot with HMLA-269, flew into Jalibah airfield with two other pilots, Captain Matthew R. Shenberger and Captain Brian T.

Bruggeman. "I think we were the very first helicopters on scene," Streeter recalled. "We got gas, re-armed and then shut down. I remember bedding down ... between fuel trucks."

Early the next morning on March 23, the U.S. Army's 507th Maintenance Company's 18-vehicle convoy had taken a wrong turn into Nasiriyah and was ambushed by Iraqi insurgents. In the ensuing firefight, 11 U.S. Army soldiers were killed and six captured. The lead element of the vehicle convoy with the company

commander, Captain Troy King, was able to escape the ambush and drove south to seek reinforcement. About 13 km south of Nasiriyah, they reached the lead element of 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines. When CPT King told Major Bill Peeples, the commander of Co A, 8th Tank Battalion, that his soldiers had been ambushed, Peeples informed the Marine chain of command of the situation and headed north to assist the stranded Army unit.

In the meantime, the three HMLA-269 pilots were unaware of what was going on but had heard, "There's something going on up north."

### An Nasiriyah

The firefight in the city brought urgent requests for air support. Later that morning, there were so many fixed (F/A-18Ds, AV-8Bs) and rotary wing (AH-1Ws, UH-1Ns) aircraft flying to the explosive scene that the aircrews devised a rotation over the battlespace. Colonel Patricia D. Saint noted in "23 Days to Baghdad: U.S. Marine Aviation Combat Element in Iraq," "Air controllers stacked fixed-wing aircraft at different altitudes until they could assign on-call missions, while the airborne direct air support center controllers ... provided oversight of helicopter operations."

The system worked well for the helicopter crews. Typically, the aircraft stayed in the fight for 30 to 45 minutes before returning to Jalibah for refueling and rearming. To speed up the refueling process, the Cobras would be "hot refueled," without shutting down the engines, a dangerous procedure unless the ground crew is well-trained. The rotation cycle between fighting and refueling kept most pilots flying 10 to 14 hours straight, accomplishing multiple flights in one day and even into the night.

As the lead elements of 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment which included a combined Anti-Armor platoon, Team Tank and Team Mech which were comprised of Companies A, B, and C, 8th Tanks, and Company B, 2nd Battalion, approached the outskirts of Nasiriyah, they were greeted by mortar explosions and an intense barrage of small arms fire. In the ensuing chaos, Company C took the initiative to lead the charge over the Saddam Canal and then continue north for a short distance; however, they were unable to notify the regiment because they did not have an operational radio. There were other failures in communications. When Co B's forward air controller requested close air support on the emergency frequency, he did not realize that so Co C was at the northeast bridge and didn't alert two A-10 Warthogs from the Pennsylvania

Air National Guard that responded to his request. He cleared them "hot" north of the bridge. The A-10s dropped eight 500-pound bombs and made several strafing runs with their 30 mm Gatling guns.

Tragically, this error contributed to numerous casualties. According to U.S. Central Command press release, 18 Marines were killed and another 14 were wounded during the event. Although eight were officially KIA (killed in action) as a result of enemy fire, the cause of death of the other 10 Marines could not be determined although they were engaged with the enemy. By approximately 6 p.m., Task Force Tarawa had seized the bridges, and the numerous medical evacuations by CH-46, CH-53 and UH-1N pilots had saved the lives of many wounded Marines.

### In Their Own Words

In October 2006, three years after the fight at Nasiriyah, Marine Corps historian, Dr. Fred Allison, conducted a group interview with four veterans of the battle—Majors Streeter and Shenberger, Lieutenant Colonel Donald "Hawk" Hawkins, and Gunnery Sergeant Kevin Berry, the operations chief for 1/2.

Here are some of the harrowing moments of that day in their own words.

Within 30 minutes of getting instructions to launch, Capt Shenberger and Capt Bruggeman took off at about 6:30 a.m. on

**Below: Marines with MWSG-37 ensured aircraft throughout 3rd MAF were frequently cleaned to prevent desert sand from clogging engines.**



COURTESY OF COL MICHAEL D. VISCONAGE, USMCR



LCPL BRYAN J. NEALY/USMC

March 23 and headed to An Nasiriyah. Streeter said he would catch up with them. Meanwhile, Capt Hawkins, the Forward Air Controller (FAC) with Co A (Tanks) described what he saw when he and his unit were a few miles south of the city.

**Hawkins:** “The morning of the 23rd, we started moving towards the city and I look out to the left and there is a man with a white pickup truck ... picking up children and throwing them into this truck, and shoving a woman ... I mean as fast as he could ... And I just remember saying, ‘This isn’t good.’ And it wasn’t 20 seconds later the mortars started and small arms fire started.”

After a short engagement, Co A neutralized the enemy and pulled back into formation on the road.

**Hawkins:** “Just as we pull back on the road ... this HMMWV [comes] racing right at us and his trailer is on fire ... For some reason ... we didn’t light him up—he came right into our position and it was Capt King from the 507th. He spills out

of his HMMWV yelling and screaming that they were being ambushed.”

Maj Bill Peebles, commander of Co A, 8th Tank Bn, a reserve unit from Kentucky, and his Marines worked their way to the ambush site and set up security around the 507th and started a pursuit of the Iraqi Fedayeen, the “Black Pajama Crowd.” Hawkins was with the lead element.

**Hawkins:** “And now the Cobras show up ... My tactic was to get their eyes [pilots’] on me and then from me to adjust on the target ... I have a 6-foot slant and range that gives me about a 10 to 15 percent ... of what’s really out there. [But] get me on top of a tank [and] my perspective gets a little bit better ... When the first Cobra shows up your situational awareness is now about 75 percent.”

Hawkins and the gunships worked as a team. Hawkins briefed the pilots on the situation, and from his vantage point, the pilots called in targets, which were verified by the FAC, who had final clearance. The pilot then “cleaned the rails” (discharged

**The main bridge in northeastern An Nasiriyah was one of the critical crossings over the Euphrates River and the Saddam Canal on the route to Baghdad.**

all of his ordnance) and headed out.

A break in the fighting gave the Marines time to evacuate soldiers of the 507th. The three original Cobras on the scene, Orkin 61, 62, and 63 from HMLA-267, pulled off leaving only Capt Streeter, who was still flying as a single ship. “I am really nervous because you don’t go anywhere as a single ship ... that’s just not a good practice.” Streeter surfed through the frequencies and was able to raise Hawkins, who immediately directed him on a target in a heavily wooded, well-defended tree line. Unfortunately, Streeter had some malfunctions with his weapons systems.

**Streeter:** “I couldn’t get my TOW missiles [to fire] ... And then when my copilot called out that there was a tank in the tree line and I went to engage it with

a Hellfire, I found out my laser bore sight was also off ... and it missed by maybe 20 or 30 feet.”

Streeter continued to press in on multiple targets until Hawkins told him to pull back. “Don’t go over there because if you go down, we can’t get you.” Streeter remarked, tongue in cheek, “That got my attention.” He contacted two Marine F/A-18 Hornets, Nail 53 and Nail 54, that were in a stack waiting to be called in on a target.

**Streeter:** “I whipped around, got the nose on it and then put the laser on the tree line ... in three minutes [the Hornet pilot] said ‘Roger that, I’m inbound’ ... I said ‘Laser’s on ... You’re cleared hot.’ And he dropped and went right on the tree, right on the money ... I remember because Hawk came up on the radio and he said, ‘Oh, the Marines are loving it. Nice job.’”

But the success almost turned to disaster for Streeter. After he and his copilot, First Lieutenant Steve Feher, followed up the Hornet’s bombs with some rockets of their own, they suddenly hovered too close to some power lines. The Cobra pilots had been flying at 150 to 200 feet with airspeeds between 80 and 120 knots because small arms threats were increasing. Running at low altitude meant they were avoiding the Man Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPAD) and rocket-propelled grenades (RPG), but they had to be very alert to avoid power lines, which could be just as deadly if their rotor blade got caught in the wires.

**Streeter:** “While I was running the Hornet I was hovering ... and there were all kinds of power lines ... and they’re all about maybe 30-40 feet high. Then I would notice from time to time how close I was coming to these power lines, and I’m talking 10-15 feet. I’d startle myself and then move away and try to find somewhere else where there weren’t so many wires ... I really think it’s a miracle we didn’t lose someone in those power lines ... it was a pretty high workload for one guy. At this point, we’re trying to fly, fight, talk, and control.”

Almost out of gas and ordnance, Streeter handed off to Capt Shenberger. Within minutes, he was following up on remaining targets, including a fuel truck, tanks, mortar positions, technicals (armed civilian vehicles) and Iraqi soldiers. Hawkins also transferred his role as FAC over to Co B’s Captain Dennis Santare, call sign “Mouth,” who is especially remembered by the Cobra pilots for his warning, “SAM [surface to air missile] in the air!”

**Shenberger:** “Everybody was probably starting to realize that this wasn’t going to



COURTESY OF COL CRAIG STREETER, USMC

**Maj Craig Streeter, left, and his copilot, Lt Steve Feher, pose in front of their Cobra in Iraq in 2003.**

be as easy of a day as we had originally thought. They [insurgents] had taken a tree line and intertwined some bunkers and trenches and placed vehicles in key positions to provide support ... lots of activity in there, which verifies how fortified those positions were and how dedicated they were to putting up a fight.”

As Shenberger returned to refuel, Streeter returned to the fight. Rather than fly solo, he joined the section of his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Hewlett. Streeter described the scene on the ground.



**Streeter:** “By that time, it was just a mess. There were a lot of vehicles on the highway ... and just a lot of smoke and dust ... I knew the action was in the tree line, and we were putting everything we could into the tree line ... more Cobras are showing up. I mean you can tell people are starting to get the word, ‘There’s a fight on in An Nasiriyah.’”

The enemy’s successful attack on the 507th Maintenance Co that morning had emboldened the Fedayeen. As Co A of 1/2 crossed the southeast bridge, the

enemy unloaded on the Marines. Meanwhile, “Charlie” Co was attacked as they headed to secure the northeast bridge over Saddam Canal.

**Hawkins:** “Charlie Company is at the north bridge, [which was] basically a registered target ... This entire canal ... every 50 feet is mortar pit after mortar pit, and all they had to do was run to the pit, drop a few rounds and run. Charlie Company started taking fire.”

As Shenberger was moving north up Highway 7 after refueling, he heard the FAC request immediate close air support.

**Shenberger:** “This is when my day kind of started to get interesting. The situation was just developing so quickly ... I was just trying to get eyes on [when] about that time, it sounds like my helicopter gets hit with a baseball bat on the canopy. It just sounded like a huge, loud bang, and I remember I kind of looked over and saw something fall onto the ground like a red tracer that was burning out ... and I’m like ‘That’s not supposed to be.’”

“I broke off and told my wingman, ‘Hey, take a look, am I missing anything?’ I was still flying, everything [was] where it’s supposed to be, and my gauges are reading correctly. So back into the fight we go because things are bad ... all the roads heading out of town were being filled by kids and women. I mean people were leaving the town, and the military-aged men were moving in.”

Enemy RPG explosions looked like black cotton puffballs in the sky as the pilots flew lower and lower. At 100 feet and below, they were sometimes parallel with the rooftops.

Shenberger worked the east side of the city, picking off technicals with rockets.

Occasionally, he would make a few gun runs to the west side of “Ambush Alley.” He could see the Fedayeen running in and out of the buildings where their ammunition and weapons were stockpiled.

Meanwhile, Hawkins was in one of four tanks under fire as they crossed the Euphrates River Bridge and swung left into some buildings.

**Hawkins:** “You know the big fear from everybody on the ground was the Cobras were going to go away. The tankers were saying how desperately important it was to keep the Cobras on overhead ... and I asked [the pilots to] please just stay on top of the tankers ... and it was ‘Roger Hawk.’ That was Marine Corps aviation at its finest.”

In the fog of war, a change of plans caused a serious miscalculation of the location of the battalion’s lead element—which was supposed to be Co B, but Co C instead had pressed forward north of the Saddam Canal Bridge. Neither the FAC nor the direct air support center was aware of this change. Two Warthog A-10s spent approximately 15 minutes coordinating their mission before dropping their ordnance on an area they believed was occupied by enemy troops. Unfortunately, Co C did not have a FAC with them to

prevent this failure of communication. Streeter and Hawkins did not get the news of the friendly fire incident until later. Shenberger was also unaware of the incident and thus didn’t realize the urgency of the CH-46s medevac pilots coming into the area.

**Shenberger:** “So I’m engaging targets, talking to the FACs. Now all of a sudden I’ve got a ‘46 saying, ‘Hey, I want to come in and pick up some casualties.’ I remember saying, ‘Hey, I’m in the middle of some CAS missions here ... You’ve got to get off this net and conduct this Medevac on another channel.’ And the bottom line was we got it all figured out ... and I ended up being there to support him, so it all worked out in the end.”

It was near sunset when the pilots returned to Jalibah after a long day of combat. Streeter was on the ground when Shenberger landed only then that he realized there was a sizeable hole in his helicopter’s rotor blade. Streeter recalled his friend’s expression of surprise when he saw the damage.

**Shenberger:** “It was a bad day ... I knew my plane had been hit ... but nothing bad enough that was going to make me not fly. And I remember out of habit from looking through the canopy when the blades slow

down, I’m watching it, and as it slowed down ... and I’m like, ‘That looked kind of weird’ and then it literally stopped right over the top of my canopy. The first thing I thought was ‘Oh man, Col Hewlett’s going to kill me [for damaging one of Hewlett’s Cobras].’ ”

**Hawkins:** “I think there would be a lot more dead Marines if you guys hadn’t pressed the way you did. You saved a lot of lives out there that day. You saved the battalion.”

The success of Marine ground and air forces during Operation Iraqi Freedom fulfilled the original concept of close air support. Indeed, the overall outcome had validated the way Marine aviators had trained for years.

*Author’s note: Special thanks to Dr. Fred Allison for his assistance in writing this article.*

*Author’s bio: Suzanne Pool-Camp has contributed previous articles to Leatherneck. Currently, she is working on a book entitled, “Hitler on Trial: The Nazis Battle Their Opponents, 1923-1933.” She and her husband, retired Marine Col Dick Camp, live in Fredericksburg, Va. 🇺🇸*



Door gunners from a UH-1 Huey search for enemy forces near the airfield at Jalibah in 2003.

# Passing the Word

Compiled by Sara W. Bock

## DOD Expands Support For Military Spouses

The Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP) program now has more than 400 employers as partners, according to officials from the Department of Defense's Military Community and Family Policy office.

Expanding its support for military spouses, DOD inducted 42 new employers into the program on Oct. 22, 2019, during a ceremony in Arlington, Va. This inductee class of federal partners was the largest in MSEP's eight-year history.

The Military Spouse Employment Partnership is a DOD initiative with employers who commit to recruit, hire, promote and retain military spouses in portable careers. The program helps prepare spouses to be job-ready and connects them with employers worldwide, giving them 24/7 access to job openings and career connections.

"The power of MSEP is the extraordinary opportunity to build connections that help military spouses find and maintain meaningful employment and careers so they can contribute financially to their households and the well-being of their families," said A.T. Johnston, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military community and family policy.

The Military Spouse Employment

Partnership has grown steadily since inducting its first class of 73 companies and organizations in 2011. Millions of jobs have been posted on the MSEP Job Search, with partner employers hiring more than 139,000 spouses.

Karen Pence, wife of Vice President Mike Pence, spoke during the ceremony and emphasized the importance of supporting the careers of military spouses.

"Military spouses are flexible, hard-working and tremendous assets to our country," said Pence. "Military spouses are the homefront heroes. I know this because I visit them all over the country and world."

While military spouses generally are well-educated and highly qualified for a range of careers, according to the Spouse Employment & Education 2017 survey of active-duty spouses, they face a 24 percent unemployment rate and a 25 percent wage gap compared to their civilian counterparts. The survey also revealed that 77 percent of these spouses want or need work, yet frequent relocations are often a barrier to finding and maintaining a rewarding career.

"You will not be sorry that you hire a military spouse," Barbara Ashley, a military spouse, said. "They will always contribute more than they receive."

The ability of spouses to obtain and

retain fulfilling employment as they relocate helps to improve the quality of life for military families and the readiness of the military force.

"Today we celebrate 42 companies that are making great strides to provide a new home to military spouses," said Deputy Defense Secretary David L. Norquist. "These organizations are helping us advance the national defense strategy."

The MSEP initiative is part of DOD's broader Spouse Education and Career Opportunities program. The department established the program to provide education and career guidance to military spouses worldwide, offering free, comprehensive resources and tools related to career exploration, education, training and licensing, employment readiness and career connections. This program also offers free career coaching services six days a week. For more information, visit <https://myseco.militaryonesource.mil/portal/>.

DOD

## VA Completes Home Loan Funding Fee Refund Initiative

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs recently completed an aggressive initiative to process home loan funding fee refunds to veteran borrowers, issuing more than \$400 million in refunds.



PO2 JAMES K. LEE, USN



PO2 JAMES K. LEE, USN

During a new partner induction ceremony in Arlington, Va., DOD inducted 42 new employers into the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, bringing the total number of participating employers to more than 400. Present at the ceremony were Second Lady of the United States Karen Pence, pictured in the above left photo, and Deputy Defense Secretary David L. Norquist, pictured in the above right photo greeting military spouse Barbara Ashley.

The refunds are the culmination of a multi-year internal review of millions of VA-backed home loans spanning almost two decades.

“VA staff worked diligently throughout the summer reviewing 130,000 cases, which is an average of 16,000 loans reviewed per week,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This effort included loans dating back nearly 20 years. Our administration prioritized fixing the problems and paid veterans what they were owed.”

The VA’s Loan Guaranty Service program identified more than 130,000 loans where a refund was potentially due. While some funding fees charged were found to be attributable to clerical errors, most fees were charged correctly. The exception was for those veterans whose exemption status changed following the issuance of a disability rating after the closing of their loan. Letters were mailed notifying veterans who were eligible for a refund.

VA has made several program and systems changes to provide veterans and lenders with the most up-to-date information possible on a veteran’s funding fee exemption status. The changes include enhancements to veteran-focused communications to better inform about the loan funding fee and when it may be waived as part of the loan transaction. Other changes include policy guidance directing lenders to inquire about a veteran’s VA disability claim status during the loan underwriting process and obtain an updated certificate of eligibility no more than three days prior to loan closing if the veteran had a disability claim pending. System and procedural changes to ensure regular internal oversight activities swiftly identify veterans eligible for fee waivers and potential refund cases have also been made.

Veterans who believe that they are entitled to a refund of the VA funding fee are strongly encouraged to call their VA Regional Loan Center at (877) 827-3702 to find out if they are eligible.

VA

### Certification Process Eases For Student Recipients of SBP

A commitment to continuing education is an important investment in the future. This is especially true for a student covered as a child annuitant under the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP).

The plan’s child-annuity payments typically end when recipients turn 18. But if you are a recipient attending full-time school—in high school or at an accredited trade school, technical or vocational institute, college or university—you are eligible to continue receiving payments



DOD

**The SBP’s child-annuity payments typically end when recipients turn 18. Recipients attending full-time school—high school or an accredited trade school, technical or vocational institute, college or university—are eligible to continue receiving payments until the end of the school year during which they turn 22, as long as they remain unmarried.**

until the end of the school year during which you turn 22, as long as you remain unmarried.

The Defense Department sponsors and subsidizes the SBP, which provides an ongoing monthly annuity—up to 55 percent of the servicemember’s retired pay—to military spouses and/or children when a military member dies while on active duty, on inactive duty or after retirement.

Coverage is automatic and comes at no cost for members on active duty and for reserve-component members while performing inactive duty training. Active-duty members can purchase coverage upon retirement. Reserve component members can elect full-time coverage, whether on active duty or not, when they reach 20 years of qualifying service for reserve retired pay.

To continue annuity payments after turning 18, student annuitants must submit a school certification form, DD 2788—Child Annuitant’s School Certification, each term/semester. The Defense Finance

and Accounting Service (DFAS) must receive the form no later than the last day of the school term to continue payments without interruption.

Remembering to file and get a school official’s certification each semester can be challenging, especially for college students immersed in studies, but it is necessary to validate that an annuitant still remains a student to be eligible to receive this important benefit. DOD is taking steps to streamline this process to make it easier to validate each student’s eligibility every semester. DFAS has created a convenient new online option for uploading and submitting school certification forms, as well as a helpful new checklist that provides tips and step-by-step instructions for completing the certification process available at <https://www.dfas.mil/retiredmilitary/survivors/School-Certifications.html>.

Andrew Corso



### ASYMCA Art & Essay Contest Gives Military Children Outlet for Creative Expression

The annual Armed Services YMCA Art & Essay Contest, sponsored by GEICO Military, is accepting entries through March 15, 2020. The topic for this year’s essays is “My Greatest Success as a Military Child,” and the topic for this year’s art is “My Military Family.” Open to children of U.S. active-duty or retired servicemembers, the winners will be announced in April and will receive a free week of summer camp. For an entry form and rules, visit [www.asymca.org](http://www.asymca.org).

ASYMCA

## DPAA Identifies Marines Killed During World War II

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) is committed to providing the fullest possible accounting for missing personnel to their families and to the nation. Below is a list of Marines from World War II whose remains recently have been identified and returned to their families for burial.

### Pearl Harbor

**PFC Marley R. Arthurholtz**, 20, of South Bend, Ind. He was assigned to the battleship USS *Oklahoma* (BB-37), which was moored at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, on Dec. 7, 1941, when the ship was attacked by Japanese aircraft. *Oklahoma* sustained multiple torpedo hits which caused it to capsize, resulting in the deaths of 429 crewmen, including PFC Arthurholtz.

### Battle of Guadalcanal

**PFC Harry C. Morrissey**, 27, of Everett, Mass. On Oct. 9, 1942, he was a member of Co B, 1st Bn, 7th Marines, participating in offensive action in the Battle of Guadalcanal. Due to the rapid movement of the unit, Marines who were killed in action were buried hastily. Morrissey and two other Marines from his battalion were reportedly interred in graves on Hill 73. From 1947-1949, the American Graves Registration Service searched for isolated burials on Guadalcanal; however, they were unable to locate PFC Morrissey's grave. In 2013, his grave was found by a resident of Guadalcanal and turned over to DPAA for identification.

### Battle of Tarawa

**PFC John R. Bayens**, 20, of Louisville, Ky. He was assigned to Co B, 1st Bn, 6th Marines, 2ndMarDiv when he landed on Betio Island in the Tarawa Atoll. PFC Bayens was killed on the third day of the battle. His remains were located in 2014 by History Flight, Inc., a nonprofit organization, and turned over to DPAA for identification.

**PFC Alfred Edwards**, 33, of Stilwell, Okla. He was assigned to Co E, 2nd Bn, 2nd Marines, 2ndMarDiv and was killed on the first day of the battle. His remains were reportedly buried in a cemetery on Betio Island. After World War II ended, no recovered remains could be associated with PFC Edwards and he was declared "non-recoverable." All of the remains on Betio that could not be identified were buried in the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii. On March 27, 2017, DPAA disinterred those remains, and using DNA analysis, PFC Edwards was identified.

DPAA

## General Paul X. "PX" Kelley

The 28th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Paul X. "PX" Kelley, who will be remembered by Marines for his courage, steadfastness and dedication to those who served with him, died Dec. 29, 2019. He was 91.

"We should honor Gen Kelley's lifetime of service to the Corps and to the nation," said Gen David Berger, CMC. "From his service in Vietnam to leading our Corps through the Beirut bombing aftermath, Gen Kelley served with honor and distinction," he added.

Born on Nov. 11, 1928, in Boston, Mass., Gen Kelley was commissioned a Marine second lieutenant in 1950 after graduating from Villanova University with a degree in economics. After completing The Basic School at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., he was assigned to 2nd Marine Division, MCB Camp Lejeune, N.C., where he served consecutively as a platoon leader, assistant battalion operations officer and assistant division training officer. He was transferred to USS *Salem*, the flagship of the 6th Fleet, where he served as the executive officer and then commanding officer of the ship's Marine Detachment.

In 1954, he was the battalion executive

officer with 1st Infantry Training Regiment. He was then ordered to Japan where he served as the Division Training Officer for 3rd Marine Division. From 1955-1956, he was the aide-de-camp to the deputy commanding general of Fleet Marine Force Pacific in Hawaii.

Following a tour at Headquarters Marine Corps, Kelley completed the Army's Airborne Pathfinder School at Fort Benning, Ga., before being assigned to 2nd Force Reconnaissance Company at MCB Camp Lejeune, where he served as the executive officer and then the commanding officer.

During his 1960 exchange tour with the British Royal Marines, he attended the Commando Course in England and held leadership roles in various Commando units.

In 1964, he assumed duties as CO of Marine Barracks Newport, R.I., a position he held until his 1965 deployment to Vietnam as the 3rd Marine Amphibious Force Combat Intelligence Officer, and then as the CO, 2nd Bn, 4th Marine Regiment. During his tour as battalion commander he was awarded the Silver Star for actions during Operation Texas.

According to the award citation, during

March 1966, then-Lieutenant Colonel Kelley led his battalion in a helicopter assault on an area in Quang Ngai Province that was heavily fortified by the Viet Cong. "With complete disregard for his own safety, [he] placed himself in a strategic, exposed position from which he could best control the assault companies and supporting arms. His personal example and bold leadership were a source of inspiration to all who were engaged in the operation."

Following an assignment to Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., where he was a Distinguished Graduate, then-Colonel Kelley served a second tour in Vietnam, this time as CO of 1st Marines, 1stMarDiv.

After various staff and command assignments as a general officer, he was promoted to general and assigned as the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1981. Gen Kelley assumed the duties as the 28th CMC on July 1, 1983. Four months later, on Oct. 23, 1983, a bomb carried by Islamic extremists exploded at the Marine Barracks in Beirut, killing 241 servicemembers. Two days later, Gen Kelley was in Frankfurt, Germany, at the bedside of Marines wounded in the

bombing, offering his support.

He retired in 1987 after 37 years of service to his Corps and his Nation. His awards include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the Navy Distinguished Service Medal, the Army Distinguished Service Medal, the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit with combat "V" and two gold stars in lieu of second and third awards, and the Bronze Star with combat "V" and gold star in lieu of second award.

**Capt G. Ray Arnett**, 95, Stockton, Calif. He was a Marine who served during WW II and the Korean War. He later worked as a geologist. During the 1980s, he held several leadership roles in the NRA. He served as the Assistant Secretary of the Interior during the Reagan administration.

**GySgt William R. Boldosser**, 96, of Newville, Pa. He fought in the South Pacific during WW II and later maintained helicopters during assignments in Japan and the U.S.

**Col Barry S. Colassard**, 86, of Woodbridge, Va. His 30-year career as an infantry officer included two tours in Vietnam. He later completed a staff tour as a war plans briefer to the President. After his retirement, he was a docent at the

National Museum of the Marine Corps.

**Robert L. "Bob" Donahue**, 89, of Albuquerque, N.M. He was wounded twice during the Korean War and spent more than a year recovering and learning to walk again. After the war he had a career in advertising and later, equipment repair.

**CWO Annie L. Grimes**, 93, of Arlington, Tenn. In 1950 she became the third African-American woman to enlist in the Marine Corps. She served for 20 years in various assignments, including as the Procurement Chief at MCB Camp Lejeune in 1965. She was an active member of the Women Marines Association.

**Dennis P. Helmer**, 80, of Westmont, N.J. He was a Marine who later was active with his local MCL detachment.

**GySgt Donald "Gunny" J. Julien**, 63, of Los Lunas, N.M. His 21 years as a radio and cryptographic specialist included Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. After his retirement from the Marine Corps, he completed his MBA and had a career in the satellite and telecommunications industry.

**LCpl Joey D. Lamp Jr.**, 31, of Hagerstown, Md. His Marine Corps service included three tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan with MAG-28, 2nd MAW. He was a member of the MCL and

volunteered as a counselor to his fellow veterans.

**Stan Quintana**, 74, of Santa Fe, N.M. He was drafted by the Minnesota Vikings and played for three seasons before enlisting. During his three years in the Marine Corps, he served a tour in Vietnam. He later had a career as a high school and college football coach.

**Edman R. Ross**, 79, of Los Angeles, Calif. He enlisted in 1960 and served at MCAS El Toro, Calif., and MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii. He also deployed with VMF-232 aboard USS *Oriskany* (CVA-34).

**GySgt Robert J. Sobkowiak**, 86, of La Crosse, Wis. He was a veteran of the Korean War and was a member of the VFW and the American Legion.

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



76th Anniversary of D-Day: Normandy to Paris

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50th Anniversary of VN War I-II-III-IV Corps Delta to DMZ

### MAY 16-25

WWI Doughboys & Devil Dogs French U.S. Battlefields & Paris

### MAY 27-JUN 9

76th Anniversary D-Day & Battle of the Bulge plus Paris

### JUN 1-9

76th Anniversary D-Day: Normandy to Paris

### JULY 2-12

Russia WWII Eastern Front Moscow, Stalingrad & Kursk

### JULY 18-28

Guam Liberation With David Webb, TV/Radio Host

### AUG 1-10

WWII Pacific "Turning the Tide" Battle of Guadalcanal

### AUG 16-30

WWII Germany "Rise & Fall of the Third Reich" Munich, Berlin, Berchtesgaden, Dresden, Nuremberg, Prague

### AUG 24-SEP 3

Vietnam I-Corps "The SgtMaj Returns"

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ing and crying when I called to tell you baby Caden had died.

You having devotions with our Lord every morning. Your faith always unshakable, regardless.

Your jokes; even the ones I've heard a million times still make me laugh.

Your voice saying, 'Daddy loves you.'

How easily you make friends and brighten a day with your laugh.

Daddy, I've looked up to you, depended on you and loved you my whole life. You were my hero, always. I'm so grateful and blessed to have you as my dad, and Papaw to my children and grandchildren. I promise they will always know how much they are loved and what an amazing man you are. Love you, Daddy."

My dad looks forward to his *Leatherneck* each month and passes it along to another Marine friend.

Patricia Blake Sparks  
Indianapolis, Ind.

• After reading your letter, I know why your father wanted you to send it to us. Your dad was obviously both a wonderful father and Marine!—Editor

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Recruiting ad listed in the *Boston Herald* between the 1800s and early 1900s.

#### Old Recruiting Ad

A Marine gave me the newspaper ad more than 30 years ago. It was published in the *Boston Herald* between the late

1800s and early 1900s. I showed the poster to my grandson, Toby, who recently enlisted. We had a long conversation about the changes from the time the ad was published to when I served from 1958 to 1962 through today and his upcoming service. A common thread throughout the conversation was Marines are all part of a family.

Cpl Phil Mason  
Marshfield, Mass.

#### Details on "The D.I." Cast Member

In response to the December 2019 Sound Off letter from Rich Boyd, I can provide limited details on one cast member of the movie, "The D.I."

Charles "Chuck" Love played the role of "Hillbilly" in the movie, notable during the killing of the sand flea scene. Chuck, a Korean War veteran, was a technical sergeant at the time of filming. He told me that due to his youthful appearance, he was cast as a recruit.

Chuck, who died in 2014, owned Love's Gun & Pawn, in DeLand, Fla. Among other items Chuck had a great collection of USMC and other military items.

Keep up the great work at *Leatherneck*.

Harvey Newton  
USMC, 1966-1968  
Ormond Beach, Fla.



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**Cpl Ryan P. Moran's son, Jack, will hopefully keep the family tradition of becoming a Marine.**

ANGEL MALONE

### Keeping the Family Tradition

Jack Ryan is the son of Corporal Ryan P. Moran. Cpl Moran served from 1999 to 2003 and was attached to 2nd Bn, 1st Regiment during the invasion of Iraq. I'm Jack's grandfather, and I am a Vietnam veteran who served from 1965 to 1969. I was a corporal and served in the Honor Guard at Marine Barracks Washington, D.C., from 1967 to 1969, where I had the distinct honor of participating in a parade for General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller in May 1968.

Jack's great grandfather was Jack Gallapo, who was with the 7th Marines

at the Chosin Reservoir. He was later a battalion fire chief in the city of Chicago.

Cpl Patrick Moran  
Kenosha, Wis.

### Birthday Ball Even More Special With Honored Guests


I had the distinct honor and pleasure to attend a small Marine Corps Birthday celebration last year at Stanford University's Hoover Institute. It was special because the honored guest and speaker was George Shultz, former Secretary of State and veteran Marine. Also in attendance were retired General James

Mattis and Congressman Paul McCloskey, another veteran Marine.

There were many other active and veteran Marines and Navy personnel in attendance. The impressive ceremony included a Marine Color Guard and honors to fallen comrades, General John A. Lejeune's birthday message, the birthday cake cutting, and a rum toast to country and Corps.

This event was particularly meaningful for me since the last Marine Corps birthday I attended was in North Korea in 1950, somewhere between Wonsan and the Chosin Reservoir.

Richard Grim  
USMC, 1947-1951  
Campbell, Calif.

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 

The Marine Corps Association Foundation thanks all of our Donors for their generous support throughout 2019.

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# Reader Assistance

Edited by Sara W. Bock

## Reunions

• **Iwo Jima Assn. of America**, Feb. 25-29, Arlington, Va. Contact Art Sifuentes, (703) 590-1292, rsifuentes@iwojimaassociation.org, www.iwojimaassociation.org.

• **Iwo Jima Veterans (Marines, Navy and all other WW II veterans)**, Feb. 12-15, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Contact Dan Zepeda, 1052 W. Sunsong Ct., Ontario, CA 91762, (951) 201-6251, zepeda012@msn.com.

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

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

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

• **Marine Corps Aviation Assn. Don E. Davis Squadron**, March 19-22, Jacksonville, N.C. Contact Jim Rodgers, rogers77oki@yahoo.com, www.avlogmarines.org.

• **MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, Calif., (all units, 1978-1982)**, Feb. 7-9, Twentynine Palms, Calif. Contact Maj Stew Rayfield, USMC (Ret), ironmajor@gmail.com.

• **1st CEB/Super Breed Assn.**, Feb. 15, Camp Pendleton, Calif. Contact Phil Bryant, 31700 Via Cordoba, Temecula, CA 92592, (760) 696-1642, admin@superbreedassociation.com.

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

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

• **3d 155s, M/4/12, 3rdMarDiv**, Sept. 13-17, Branson, Mo. Contact SgtMaj Gordon Niska, USMC (Ret), (770) 868-8694, sniska@windstream.net.

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

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

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

• **41st OCC/TBS 3-67**, Oct. 22, San

Diego, Calif. Contact Paul Disario, (559) 273-9549, pdisario@comcast.net.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Wanted

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

• Dennis Weems, P.O. Box 6535, Bossier City, LA 71171, wants **platoon photos** and a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 1028, San Diego, 1969**.

• Rachel Ivory, pookie34428@yahoo.com, wants a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 3056, Parris Island, 1967**.

• GySgt Mort Sanford, USMC (Ret), (252) 223-5138, msanford@ec.rr.com, wants a **recruit graduation book** for **Plt 91, Parris Island, 1955**. He has a **platoon photo** he will share with **anyone looking for a copy**.

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



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# Saved Round

By Nancy S. Lichtman



COURTESY OF THE JOHN H. CRAVEN COLLECTION, MARINE CORPS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

**PRAYERS FOR THE FAITHFUL**—Lieutenant John H. Craven, USN, Chaplain, 14th Marines, conducted a religious service on the hatch of a troop transport ship after returning from the Battle of Iwo Jima in March 1945. LT Craven, known among the men as “John the Baptist,” served with Marines throughout the Pacific island-hopping campaign, receiving a Bronze Star for his actions on Saipan.

He later said of his time in the Pacific, “In combat our main action was to go from place to place, unit to unit, and start out early in the morning and go ‘til dark, just visiting one unit after the other and many times just have a very brief service. We had some very small hymn books ... and some testaments I could carry in my map case, and we would just gather a few men together in a bomb crater or defilade ... and I would have one service after the other ... then we had to take our turn at the cemetery. Each chaplain from different units would go down and take his turn for burial. We had a brief committal service for each one as they brought the bodies in.”

Craven enlisted in the Marine Corps and completed boot camp at Parris Island in 1933. Two years later, he left active duty to attend college and the seminary. During World War II, he returned to the Marine Corps as a chaplain in the South Pacific. He served with Marines again during the Korean War. For his actions ministering to Marines in the brutal conditions at the Chosin Reservoir, he was the recipient of a gold star in lieu of a second Bronze Star.

His ministry to Marines continued during the Vietnam War when he served as the chaplain for Fleet Marine Force Pacific in 1960. From 1969 until his 1974 retirement, he was the Chaplain of the Marine Corps.

On the 50th anniversary of Craven’s Marine Corps enlistment in 1983, General Paul X. “PX” Kelley, the 28th Commandant of the Marine Corps, remarked that Captain Craven was a legend in his own time, serving with Marines longer than any other chaplain in American history. 🇺🇸

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