



The Straight Scoop

Department Newsletter of the
Marine Corps League
P.O. Box 1224
Athens, OH 45701-1224



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Department Officers:

Commandant: Mike McLain, 304-464-5049
Sr. Vice Commandant: Rick Shank, 304-633-1814
Jr. Vice Commandant: Greg Irwin, 304-704-5758
Judge Advocate: Jim McDade, 304-549-5735
Jr. Past Commandant: Scott Kirby, 304-588-0318
Legislative: Hershel Williams, 304-743-1026
Public Relations: Jean Lamb, 304-595-1482
Historian: Mike Lyon, 304-419-0982
Asst Aide-de-Camp: Larry Goff, 304-752-2106

Adjutant: Patti Leib, 740-591-8611
Paymaster: Patti Leib, 740-591-8611
Chaplain: Frank Armentrout, 304-837-4011
Sgt.-at-Arms: Shaun Scott, 304-532-4186
Asst. Sgt-at-Arms: Allen Miller, 304-379-0731
Chief of Staff: Roger Ware, 304-636-4365
Web Sgt: Steven Swenton, 304-277-8872
Aide-de-Camp: Richard Sneigle, 304-388-7901
Asst Chaplain: Roy Vanscoy, 740-538-1917

Department E-mail contact: mclain@suddenlink.net

Department Web site: <http://www.mcleaguedeptofwv.org/>

Department Adjutant/Paymaster: pattileib024@gmail.com

PO Box 1224

Athens, OH 45701-1224

Newsletter Producer: Roger Ware, 181 Weese Street, Elkins, WV 26241 E-mail: rrware@yahoo.com

Newsletter Interim Editor: Patti Leib

Happy Birthday to everyone who has a birthday in January

Happy New Year!!



Commandant's Letter ~ January 2023

Greeting Marines, Associate members, Navy FMF Corpsmen and Chaplains:

Well, we made it through another landmark year! Twenty-twenty-two certainly had its ups and downs, and we lost some remarkable and unreplacable members. John Nanny, the Scholarship Chairman for more than 15 years last January – then of course our WWII Medal of Honor Recipient, Hershel Woody Williams. But 2022 also brought us some successes and we have a lot of Detachments working hard to grow and retain members. West Virginia has been a shining example for the entire League, and we can be proud of that. West Virginia was proud to have the very first National Associate Member of the Year, and I believe we have more Associates to take the next couple of awards in the coming years. Our Department also boasts several National Marine of the Year recipients, so keep up the good work and keep making us proud!

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season with family and friends, maybe some travel and adventures. We had some great 247th Marine Corps Birthday Balls across the State; my wife and I were able to attend four of them and all were remarkably successful. It's great to travel (even in bad weather) to see what the Detachments are doing and to meet new friends. We try at the Department level to support the efforts of all of our Detachments, so if you're planning an event, let us know so we can come to participate and support you.

Don't forget – in just a couple of days (January 7th) the Hurricane Detachment William B Fulks Det 1474 will be hosting our January Quarterly Meeting in Winfield. I'll be in Florida, but Sr. Vice Commandant Rick Shank is well prepared to fill in and it promises to be a productive meeting followed by a great Growl. This meeting is important for each Detachment to be represented as the Department Award Nomination packets and Marine of the Year and Associate Member of the Year nomination packets will all be distributed. The due dates come quickly, so make sure your Commandant or other representative is present to accept the packets. In addition, pistol raffle tickets will be distributed to each Detachment. This is the only fundraiser that the Department does, and the profit is split 50/50 with the Hershel Woody Williams Scholarship fund so pick up your tickets and get them sold to keep the Scholarship program going in Woody's honor.

Also, if you haven't registered yet for the 2023 Department of WV Convention May 19-20, do it right away... this is our 50th Anniversary and it promises to be an event to remember! Hotel rooms are going fast, and if we fill our block of rooms, there may not be extra rooms at this hotel. Don't forget, only members who are registered and attend the business meeting will receive the FREE 50th Anniversary Challenge Coin and Ribbon. Additional coins, ribbons, mini and large medals have been ordered, so make sure your Detachment has submitted payment for their order. We might have a few extras to sell at the Convention, but we don't anticipate having more made in the future – get them now while you can.

Happy New Year to all! Let's make 2023 our best year yet!

My best, God bless and Semper Fidelis,

Mike

Chaplain's Corner

**“If My People who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”
2 Chronicles 7:14**

Have you heard of the 1 in 60 rule? It is a rule of thumb that pilots use in air navigation. The basic premise is that for each degree the aircraft is off course over a distance of 60 nautical miles, it will result in being approximately 1 nautical mile off from the intended destination. So, to break this down, if you are off course just one degree, after a mile you are off almost 100 feet. If you were aiming to fly around the equator, you'd end up 500 miles off course!!

Starting just one degree off, which is hardly anything, leads to missing the mark. Pilots know this for navigation. In a spiritual sense, God's people understand a similar principle.

We know what it is to miss the mark. We make an ever-so-slight shift toward what is not right, good, or true, and over time it takes us far from the Lord and His plan. If we are willing to humble ourselves, pray, and repent, we can have a fresh, new start. We can get the course correction we desperately need. Let's start today, right here, right now.

Father, thank You for the fresh start we can have in You. We want to follow You closely and stay on course.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Marines,

A reminder from Laura Hamilton, (Mideast Division Adjutant) of the upcoming event.

Mid-Winter Conference:

2/23/2023 – 2/25/2023 (check in 2/22, check out 2/26) Sheraton Norfolk **Waterside, 777 Waterside Drive Norfolk, VA** <https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/orfsi-sheraton-norfolk-waterside-hotel/> Group Code: MCL Phone: (757-622-6664) Room rate \$151.35 (inclusive of 15% tax & \$3 resort fee) and includes buffet breakfast for two (2) and garage parking. Offsite garage parking is \$14 per day per entry **IF YOU'RE NOT STAYING AT HOTEL** (each time entering garage each day). Valet Parking is \$30 per day. Please make your room reservation directly to the hotel.

Dear MSO/VSO Leaders,

Today the Defense Health Agency announced that Humana Government Business (Human Military) has been awarded the TRICARE East Region and TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corporation has been awarded the TRICARE West Region contract. Humana Government Business and TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corporation will administer the TRICARE health plan and provide TRICARE coverage beginning in 2024. The official press release is attached for reference.

[> U.S. Department of Defense > Contract](#)

[Changes to TRICARE Expected in 2024 > TRICARE Newsroom > Articles](#)

We hope this information is useful to your organization and members. As always, if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to get in touch.

Tony W. Joyner - Chief, Strategic Outreach
Communications Division - Defense Health Agency/Military Health System

For your awareness:

VA received confirmation from the Federal Register that AR62 Proposed rule (Payments Under State Home Care Agreements for Nursing Home Care) is scheduled to publish on Wednesday, December 21, 2022.

This regulation will be placed on public inspection tomorrow Tuesday, December 20 @ 8:45am. A copy of the plain language summary is provided below.

AR62(P) Payments Under State Home Care Agreements for Nursing Home Care

What does the regulation do? This Proposed rulemaking amends the State home per diem regulation to provide a new formula for calculating the prevailing rate VA would pay a State home that enters into a State home care agreement to provide nursing home care to eligible veterans.

Who does it impact? State homes

Why is it important? VA needs to update its payment methodology because VA's current payment methodology is based on an outdated Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) methodology that is no longer being used by CMS.

Why are we doing it? VA currently uses a methodology published by CMS to calculate the per diem it pays to State homes. Effective October 1, 2019, CMS finalized a new payment methodology that neither VA nor the State homes wish to adopt because it focuses on incentivizing providers to take on patients, which is not an issue VA faces with State homes that provide nursing home care. Therefore, we are proposing to augment our current methodology. The intended effect is to establish a methodology that is fair, rational, and reliable.

The below regulation went on Public Inspection (PI) and was published Friday 12/30/2022.

**AR71(FF) Statutory Increase in Operations and
Maintenance Grant Funding**

What does the regulation do? This final rule provides a technical change to existing VA regulations that govern Federal grants to States and Tribal Organizations to establish, expand, improve, or operate and maintain veterans' cemeteries. Public Law 116-315 amended 38 U.S.C. § 2408(f)(2) to increase the maximum total amount of grants that may be awarded in any fiscal year from \$5 to \$10 million for the purpose of operations and maintenance projects at State or Tribal veterans' cemeteries.

VA regulations under 38 CFR Part 39 quote this statutory limit in three sections, which must be updated to accurately reflect the change.

Who does it impact? This final rule impacts grant applicants of the Veterans Cemetery Grants Program (currently include States and Tribal Organizations) who seek grant funds to improve cemetery appearance through cleaning, raising, and realigning headstones, leveling gravesites and turfgrass improvement.

Because Congress increased the total monetary limit on what VA can award for this type of grant, VA could potentially award more grants in the operations and maintenance projects category. However, VA has historically received more conforming applications for grants than can be supported by available funds, which means we cannot fund every grant application.

VA's cemetery grants are awarded based on priority groups according to regulation. Operations and maintenance projects are the lowest priority group, Priority Group 4, and can only be funded if there are not enough conforming applications in the higher priority categories (38 CFR 39.2(c)).

VA's priority groups are published at 38 CFR 39.3 and provided here for convenient reference:

- (1) **Priority Group 1** - Projects needed to avoid disruption in burial service that would otherwise occur at existing veterans cemeteries within 4 years of the date of the preapplication. Such projects would include expansion projects as well as improvement projects (such as construction of additional or replacement facilities) when such improvements are required to continue interment operations.
- (2) **Priority Group 2** - Projects for the establishment of new veterans cemeteries.
- (3) **Priority Group 3** - Expansion projects at existing veterans cemeteries when a disruption in burial service due to the exhaustion of existing gravesites is not expected to occur within 4 years of the date of the preapplication.
- (4) **Priority Group 4** - Improvement projects for cemetery landscaping or infrastructure, such as building expansion and upgrades to roads and irrigation systems, that are not directly related to the development of new gravesites. Operation and Maintenance Projects that address NCA's national shrine standards of appearance are included in this group.

VA announces cemetery grant awards each year by notifying Congress, publishing a press release, and posting the award announcements on our website.

Why is it happening/important? Because VA quotes the statutory limit for operation and maintenance projects in regulation, we must update the regulation for accuracy.

VA first requested through legislative proposal that Congress raise this statutory limit at a time when we were actively providing operations and maintenance grants and there were grants that we could not support due to the limit, and yet we had available funding.

Since then, the profile of grant applications has shifted, and we have increased need to support expansion grants – the highest priority. With the available funding, we have not, (since 2019) been able to award operations and maintenance grants. However, if we can award them in the future, the increased limit will provide us the increased flexibility we sought.

VA could choose not to establish the new statutory limit in regulation; however, we think it is helpful to make this limit known to the applicant community in the context of the regulations which provide related and extensive guidance on the grant program and application process.

Why are we doing it? VA's cemetery grants program is administered through Part 39 regulations which include three mentions of the statutory limit on the aggregate dollar amount of grants that may be awarded for operation and maintenance projects in any fiscal year. Because the amount is published in regulation, and the amount was changed by statute, it is necessary to publish this final rule to ensure the regulation accurately reflects the statutory limit.

In addition, the following information regarding the PACT Act Sub-regulatory Guidance is provided below. This sub-regulatory guidance will publish and go for public inspection on 22 DEC.

The VA has accomplished an important next step in implementing the PACT Act by publishing notice of sub-regulatory guidance in the form of a VBA Policy Letter to the Federal Register. The issuance of this policy has the benefit of allowing VA to operationalize the PACT Act and deliver earned benefits to Veterans and their dependents as quickly as possible while simultaneously continuing efforts to finalize regulations.

Claims processors will follow the guidance in the VBA Policy Letter when processing PACT Act claims beginning on January 1, 2023. The policy includes information regarding:

- changes to the disability compensation examination requirements when there is evidence a Veteran participated in a toxic exposure risk activity,
- the expanded presumptive locations associated with radiation exposure,
- the expanded presumptive conditions and locations associated with herbicide exposure,
- the statutory amendments involving certain benefits for Persian Gulf War Veterans,
- the established presumptive conditions associated with exposure to burn pits and other toxins; and
- an avenue for a claimant-elected reevaluation of previously denied dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) claims that can result in retroactive effective dates for benefits.

Thank you for your service, leadership, advocacy, and partnership with the VA.

I hope everyone had Happy Holidays and will have a great year in 2023.

Kimberly M. Mitchell - Senior Advisor

VSO Liaison - Office of the Secretary

Department of Veterans Affairs - 810 Vermont Ave. NW - Washington, DC 20420

TRUE STORY: Twenty years ago, in Nashville, Tennessee, during the first week of January, 1996, more than 4,000 baseball coaches descended upon the Opryland Hotel for the 52nd annual ABCA's convention.

While I waited in line to register with the hotel staff, I heard other more veteran coaches rumbling about the lineup of speakers scheduled to present during the weekend. One name kept resurfacing, always with the same sentiment — "John Scolinos is here? Oh, man, worth every penny of my airfare."

Who is John Scolinos, I wondered? No matter; I was just happy to be there.

In 1996, Coach Scolinos was 78 years old, and five years retired from a college coaching career that began in 1948. He shuffled to the stage to an impressive standing ovation, wearing dark polyester pants, a light blue shirt, and a string around his neck from which home plate hung — a full-sized, stark-white home plate.

Seriously, I wondered, who is this guy?

After speaking for 25 minutes, not once mentioning the prop hanging around his neck, Coach Scolinos appeared to notice the snickering among some of the coaches. Even those who knew Coach Scolinos had to wonder exactly where he was going with this, or if he had simply forgotten about home plate since he'd gotten on stage. Then, finally ...

"You're probably all wondering why I'm wearing home plate around my neck," he said, his voice growing irascible. I laughed along with the others, acknowledging the possibility. "I may be old, but I'm not crazy. The reason I stand before you today is to share with you baseball people what I've learned in my life, what I've learned about home plate in my 78 years."

Several hands went up when Scolinos asked how many Little League coaches were in the room. "Do you know how wide home plate is in Little League?"

After a pause, someone offered, "Seventeen inches?," more of a question than answer.

"That's right," he said. "How about in Babe Ruth's day? Any Babe Ruth coaches in the house?" Another long pause.

"Seventeen inches?" a guess from another reluctant coach.

"That's right," said Scolinos. "Now, how many high school coaches do we have in the room?" Hundreds of hands shot

up, as the pattern began to appear. “How wide is home plate in high school baseball?”

“Seventeen inches,” they said, sounding more confident.

“You’re right!” Scolinos barked. “And you college coaches, how wide is home plate in college?”

“Seventeen inches!” we said, in unison.

“Any Minor League coaches here? How wide is home plate in pro ball?”.....“Seventeen inches!”

“RIGHT! And in the Major Leagues, how wide home plate is in the Major Leagues?”

“Seventeen inches!”

“SEV-EN-TEEN INCHES!” he confirmed, his voice bellowing off the walls. “And what do they do with a Big-League pitcher who can’t throw the ball over 17 inches?” Pause. “They send him to Pocatello !” he hollered, drawing raucous laughter. “What they don’t do is this: they don’t say, ‘Ah, that’s okay, Jimmy. If you can’t hit a 17-inch target? We’ll make it 18 inches or 19 inches. We’ll make it 20 inches, so you have a better chance of hitting it. If you can’t hit that, let us know so we can make it wider still, say 25 inches.’”

Pause. “Coaches... what do we do when your best player shows up late to practice? or when our team rules forbid facial hair, and a guy shows up unshaven? What if he gets caught drinking? Do we hold him accountable? Or do we change the rules to fit him? Do we widen home plate? ”

The chuckles gradually faded as 4,000 coaches grew quiet, the fog lifting as the old coach’s message began to unfold. He turned the plate toward himself and, using a Sharpie, began to draw something. When he turned it toward the crowd, point up, a house was revealed, complete with a freshly drawn door and two windows. “This is the problem in our homes today. With our marriages, with the way we parent our kids. With our discipline.

We don’t teach accountability to our kids, and there is no consequence for failing to meet standards. We just widen the plate!”

Pause. Then, to the point at the top of the house he added a small American flag. “This is the problem in our schools today. The quality of our education is going downhill fast, and teachers have been stripped of the tools they need to be successful, and to educate and discipline our young people. We are allowing others to widen home plate! Where is that getting us?”

Silence. He replaced the flag with a Cross. “And this is the problem in the Church, where powerful people in positions of authority have taken advantage of young children, only to have such an atrocity swept under the rug for years. Our church leaders are widening home plate for themselves! And we allow it.”

“And the same is true with our government. Our so-called representatives make rules for us that don’t apply to themselves. They take bribes from lobbyists and foreign countries. They no longer serve us. And we allow them to widen home plate! We see our country falling into a dark abyss while we just watch.”

I was amazed. At a baseball convention where I expected to learn something about curve balls and bunting and how to run better practices, I had learned something far more valuable.

From an old man with home plate strung around his neck, I had learned something about life, about myself, about my own weaknesses and about my responsibilities as a leader. I had to hold myself and others accountable to that which I knew to be right, lest our families, our faith, and our society continue down an undesirable path.

“If I am lucky,” Coach Scolinos concluded, “you will remember one thing from this old coach today. It is this: “If we fail to hold ourselves to a higher standard, a standard of what we know to be right; if we fail to hold our spouses and our children to the same standards, if we are unwilling or unable to provide a consequence when they do not meet the standard; and if our schools & churches & our government fail to hold themselves accountable to those they serve, there is but one thing to look forward to ...”

With that, he held home plate in front of his chest, turned it around, and revealed its dark black backside, “...We have dark days ahead!”

Note: Coach Scolinos died in 2009 at the age of 91, but not before touching the lives of hundreds of players and coaches, including mine. Meeting him at my first ABCA convention kept me returning year after year, looking for similar wisdom and inspiration from other coaches. He is the best clinic speaker the ABCA has ever known because he was so much more than a baseball coach. His message was clear: “Coaches, keep your players—no matter how good they are—your own children, your churches, your government, and most of all, keep yourself at 17 inches.”

And this my friends is what our country has become and what is wrong with it today, and now go out there and fix it!

"Don't widen the plate."

We just experienced some unusually cold weather... but if you think that was bad, check out some facts about the Arctic Circle: Appropriately, the word “arctic” itself is derived from the [Greek word *arktos*](#), which means “bear.” However, the bear in reference isn’t the polar variety, but instead the celestial kind, specifically the Ursa Major (Great Bear) and Ursa Minor (Little Bear) constellations. Both of the constellations are visible

from the Northern Hemisphere, and the latter contains the North Star. At the opposite end of the world, Antarctica gets its name because those constellations aren't visible from that region. Interestingly enough, there are also no animal bears in Antarctica.

Polar bears are the largest land carnivores in the world, and they are [only found in the Arctic](#) region. They reside around ice-covered waters and are dependent on sea ice for food, to rest, and to breed. Fully grown male polar bears measure around eight to nine feet from nose to foot, while females measure approximately six to seven feet. Despite their enormous size, polar bears are only about the size of a guinea pig when born. These cuddly-looking bears feed mainly on seals, are talented swimmers, and possess a coat of white fur (although it's [actually transparent](#)) to camouflage themselves in their snowy habitats.

The Arctic Circle is located at approximately 66.3 degrees north of the equator; however, its actual location changes slightly every year. This is due to the fluctuation of Earth's axial tilt, which is influenced by the orbit of the moon and the consequent tidal changes. The same axial tilt causes the different seasons that we experience on Earth. Currently, the circle is moving north at a rate of around [49 feet per year](#). In 2017, an art exhibit called [Orbis et Globus](#) was inaugurated on Iceland's Grimsey Island to monitor the circle's movements.

In the mid-1800s, German-born American artist Thomas Nast made a name for himself for his caricatures and political cartoons. He's also credited with [creating the popular image of Santa Claus](#) (or Father Christmas). In 1863, *Harper's Weekly* magazine published two of his illustrations that depicted Santa as a larger-than-life character with a long beard and stocking cap. One of the images was inscribed with the words "Santa Clausville, N.P." The N.P. was an abbreviation of North Pole, and so began the myth of Santa residing in a far-off and remote northern land.

For many, the North Pole is often associated with Santa Claus, flying reindeer, and toy-making elves. What most don't know is that there are actually [four recognized North Poles](#). The Geographical North Pole (aka True North) is the northernmost point on the planet and where all of Earth's lines of longitude meet. The Magnetic North Pole is the spot at which the planet's lines of magnetic force all point vertically downward (and the point that attracts the needle of a compass). The [Geomagnetic North Pole](#) is the northern end of where the axis of the magnetosphere — the magnetic field that surrounds the Earth and extends into space — intersects the planet. Finally, the North Pole of Inaccessibility is the point in the Arctic Ocean that's furthest from any coastline.

Have you ever been worried climate change, floods, or other natural disasters would destroy earth's crops? Set amid the frigid waters between Greenland and Norway is the Norwegian island of Svalbard. Here, the Norwegian government opened the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, which is the [world's largest secure seed storage](#), in 2008. This 10,764-square-foot vault is buried almost entirely into the island's permafrost — only the concrete entrance is visible to the outside world, and only scientists and staff are allowed inside. The structure has the capacity to store 4.5 million different seed types and maintains them at constant temperatures of 37.4 to 39.2 degrees Fahrenheit. The collection is stashed here for safekeeping in case of crop failures or natural disasters — because of its naturally stable Arctic climate, and also since it's one of the least likely places on Earth to experience either a flood or a heat wave, both of which could damage the seeds.

The Arctic Circle incorporates portions of eight countries: Canada, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Finland, Russia, Sweden, and the United States. And despite a harsh climate and often inhospitable living conditions (for most), [an estimated 4 million people](#) live and work there year-round. Murmansk, in northwestern Russia, is the largest and one of the oldest settlements in the Arctic Circle. This city on the Barents Sea is home to around 300,000 residents and is known for its seaports and **naval bases**. In fact, [eight of the 10 largest](#) Arctic settlements are located in Russia.

Members of the Hershel "Woody" Williams Detachment 340, Thank you for your membership in the MCL. We want to thank everyone that worked hard on the Veteran food baskets and Marine care packages this year. Please see attached document to see a few pictures. On behalf of the Detachment Officers and Staff we wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and blessed New Year! Please keep our Marines, Armed Forces and their families in your thoughts and prayers as they serve in harm's way this holiday season. (*see photos*)
Semper Fidelis,
Rick Shank
Commandant



Food pick up at Aldies



Marines helping Marines, OORAH!!!



Loading food into Post 16



Meals packed for 32 Veteran families



Detachment Christmas Care Packages for our Marine recipients. Merry Christmas and Semper Fi brothers and sisters!





Well Done Marines!!!!!!!
Semper Fi!

What Makes a Marine a Marine?

Ask a Marine what's so special about the Marines and the answer would be "esprit de corps", an unhelpful French phrase that means exactly what it looks like – the spirit of the Corps, but what is that spirit, and where does it come from?

The Marine Corps is the only branch of the U.S. Armed Forces that recruits people specifically to Fight. The Army emphasizes personal development (an Army of One), the Navy promises fun (let the journey begin), the Air Force offers security (it's a great way of life). Missing from all the advertisements is the hard fact that a soldier's lot is to suffer and perhaps to die for his people and take lives at the risk of his/her own.

Even the thematic music of the services reflects this evasion. The Army's Caisson Song describes a pleasant country outing. Over hill and dale, lacking only a picnic basket. Anchors Aweigh, the Navy's celebration of the joys of sailing, could have been penned by Jimmy Buffet. The Air Force song is a lyric poem of blue skies and engine thrust. All is joyful and invigorating, and safe. There are no land mines in the dales nor snipers behind the hills, no submarines or cruise missiles threaten the ocean jaunt, no bandits are lurking in the wild blue yonder. The Marines Hymn, by contrast, is all combat. We fight our Country's battles, First to fight for right and freedom, We have fought in every clime and place where we could take a gun, in many a strife we have fought for life and never lost our nerve.

The choice is made clear. You may join the Army to go to adventure training, or join the Navy to go to Bangkok, or join the Air Force to go to computer school. You join the Marine Corps to go to War! But the mere act of signing the enlistment contract confers no status in the Corps. The Army recruit is told from his first minute in uniform that "you're in the Army now", soldier. The Navy and Air Force enlistees are sailors or airmen as soon as they get off bus at the training center. The new arrival at Marine Corps boot camp is called a recruit, or worse, (a lot worse), but never a MARINE. Not yet; maybe never. He or she must earn the right to claim the title of UNITED STATES MARINE, and failure returns you to civilian life without hesitation or ceremony.

Recruit Platoon 2210 at San Diego, California trained from October through December of 1968. In Viet Nam the Marines were taking two hundred casualties a week, and the major rainy season operation Meade River, had not even begun, yet Drill Instructors had no qualms about winnowing out almost a quarter of their 112 recruits, graduating eighty-one. Note that this was post-enlistment attrition; every one of those who were dropped had been passed by the recruiters as fit for service. But they failed the test of Boot Camp, not necessarily for physical reasons at least two were outstanding high school athletes for whom the calisthenics and running were child's play. The cause of their failure was not in the biceps nor the legs, but -in the spirit. They had lacked the will to endure the mental and emotional strain, so they would not be Marines. Heavy commitments and high casualties notwithstanding, the Corps reserves the right to pick and choose.

History classes in boot camp? Stop a soldier on the street and ask him to name a battle of World War One. Pick a sailor at random to describe the epic fight of the Bon Homme Richard. Everyone has heard of McGuire Air Force Base. So, ask any airman who Major Thomas McGuire was, and why he is so commemorated. I am not carping, and there is no sheer in this criticism. All the services have glorious traditions, but no one teaches the young soldier, sailor, or airman what his uniform means and why he should be proud of it. But – ask a Marine about World War One, and you will hear of the wheat field at Belleau Wood and the courage of the Fourth Marine Brigade, fifth and sixth regiments.

Faced with an enemy of superior numbers entrenched in tangled forest undergrowth, the Marines received an order to attack that even the charitable cannot call ill – advised. It was insane. Artillery support was absent and air support hadn't been invented yet, so the Brigade charged German machine guns with only bayonets, grenades, and indomitable fighting spirit. A bandy-legged little barrel of a gunnery sergeant, Daniel J. Daly, rallied his company with a shout, "Come on you sons a bitches, do you want to live forever?" He took out three machine guns himself, and they would give him the Medal of Honor except for a technicality, he already had two of them. French liaison-officers, hardened though they were by four years of trench bound slaughter, were shocked as the Marines charged across the open wheat field under a blazing sun directly into the teeth of enemy fire. Their action was so anachronistic on the twentieth-century battlefield that they might as well have been

swinging cutlasses, but – the enemy was only human; they could not stand up to this. So, the Marines took Belleau Wood. The Germans called them “DOGS FROM THE DEVIL”

Every Marine knows this story and dozens more. We have taught them in boot camp as a regular part of the curriculum. Every Marine will always be taught them! You can learn to don a gas mask anytime, even on the plane in route to the war zone, but before you can wear the Eagle Globe and Anchor and claim the title you must know about the Marines who made that emblem and title meaningful. So long as you can march and shoot and revere the legacy of the Corps you can take your place in line. And that line is unified spirit as in purpose. A soldier wears branch of service insignia on his collar, metal shoulder pins and cloth sleeve patches to identify his unit. Sailors wear a rating badge that identifies what they do for the Navy. Marines wear only the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor, together with personal ribbons and their CHERISHED marksmanship badges.

There is nothing on a Marine’s uniform to indicate what he or she does, nor what unit the Marine belongs to. You cannot tell by looking at a Marine whether you are seeing a truck driver, a computer programmer, or a machine gunner. The Corps explains this as a security measure to conceal the identity and location of units, but the Marines penchant for publicity makes that the least likely of explanations. No, the Marine is amorphous, even anonymous, by conscious design.

Every Marine is a rifleman first and foremost, a Marine first, last, and Always! You may serve a four-year enlistment or even a twenty plus year career without seeing action, but if the word is given, you’ll charge across that Wheatfield! Whether a Marine has been schooled in automated supply, or automotive mechanics, or aviation electronics, is immaterial. Those things are secondary – the Corps does them because it must. The modern battle requires the technical appliances, and since the enemy has them, so do we, but no Marine boasts mastery of them. Our pride is in our marksmanship, our discipline, and our membership in a fraternity of courage and sacrifice.

“For the honor of the fallen, for the glory of the dead”, Edgar Guest wrote of Belleau Wood, “the living line of courage kept the faith and moved ahead”. They are all gone now, those Marines who made a French farmer’s little Wheatfield into one of the most enduring of Marine Corps legends. Many of them did not survive the day, and eight long decades have claimed the rest. But their actions are immortal. The Corps remembers them and honors what they did, and so they live forever.

Dan Daly’s shouted challenge takes on its true meaning – if you lie in the trenches you may survive for now, but someday you may die, and no one will care. If you charge the guns you may die in the next two minutes, but you will be one of the immortals. All Marines die in the red flash of battle or the white cold of the nursing home. In the vigor of youth or the infirmity of age all will eventually die, but the Marine Corps lives on. Every Marine who ever lived is living still, in the Marines who claim the title today. It is that sense of belonging to something that will outlive your own mortality, which gives people a light to live by and a flame to mark their passing.

[author unknown]

Submitted by:

Sgt. Thomas M. Dunne, USMC

1967-1971

Vietnam Veteran

Detachment #1143

Eastern Panhandle Marine Corps League

Martinsburg, WV

REMEMBER to check on widows and shut-ins during these cold winter months! Make sure they are okay and are warm and fed; offer to take someone to a doctor’s appointment or grocery store. Let’s look out for our Marine families - brothers and sisters. A phone call or cheery note is always welcome, too!

Pending Events

2023 Department of WV Spring Quarterly Meeting will be January 7, 2023 hosted by Huntington Detachment 340 in Huntington, WV at American Legion Post 16, 1421 6th Avenue Huntington, WV 25701 Staff Officers Meeting is 0930 AM with general business meeting at 1000 AM. WV Pack Growl will immediately follow Dept. Meeting.

2023 MCL Midwinter Staff Conference will be 2/23/2023 – 2/25/2023 (check in 2/22, check out 2/26) Sheraton Norfolk Waterside, 777 Waterside Drive Norfolk, VA <https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/orfsi-sheraton-norfolkwaterside-hotel/> Group Code: MCL Phone: (757-622-6664) Room rate includes up to 4 breakfast vouchers per occupancy. \$129.00 per night + prevailing tax (currently 14%) Please make your room reservation directly to the hotel.

2023 Department of WV Department Convention will be May 19-21, 2023 at Comfort Inn & Suites, 167 Elizabeth Pike, Mineral Wells, WV 26150. Phone: 304-699-0886. Room rate: \$85.00 Free breakfast, WIFI, parking. Rooms have refrigerator and microwave. **Do not call the hotel for room reservations** as they are being booked via Detachment 1087 to use tax exemption. **Contact Don Dearth, 304-481-9595 for rooms, banquet and advance registration.** The banquet rate is \$30.00. Make check payable to MCL Detachment 1087. If you want to use your points or credit card then contact the hotel. They will give you the block rate but will charge you tax. The hotel has 22 jacuzzi rooms so when you call Don Dearth to book your room, let him know if you need an ADA room or want a King bed or want one of those jacuzzi rooms. If you are not sure if you are actually attending, go ahead and book your room, as you can always call and cancel. You do not have to make payment for rooms, banquet and \$5.00 pre-registration now but need to before the cut off date.

2023 Modern Day Marine Expo will be June 27-27, 2023 at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC.

2023 MCL National Convention will be August 14-18, 2023 in Oklahoma City, OK. At Omni Oklahoma City Hotel Resorts, 100 W Oklahoma City Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73109, (405) 438-6500 Room rate \$165.48 includes tax. Breakfast is included. Parking not included but is \$10 per day per car. Pet friendly with service animals no charge but others is \$165.00 per week. Rate good for 3 days prior and afterwards. Reservation open August 22 at 0800.

2024 MCL National Convention will be August 11-16, 2024 in Denver, CO at Hyatt Regency Denver Tech Center, 7800 East Tuffs Ave, Denver, CO, 80237. 303-779-1234 Room rate is \$167.84 includes tax, parking \$10 per day per car, breakfast not included but host detachment will pay.