

SEMPER FIDELIS

NEWSLETTER FOR RETIRED MARINES



10 November 2018

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

As we celebrate our 243rd birthday, Marines remain in combat, forward-deployed throughout the world confronting every challenge with courage, loyalty, and faithfulness. Each year on this day, we renew our resolve to be the most ready when the Nation is least ready; we pay tribute to all who forged our proud legacy; we recommit ourselves to defending freedom anytime and anywhere; we stand ready to aid those devastated by natural disasters; and we honor the families and loved ones who faithfully stand beside us.

This year marks a number of significant milestones. One hundred years ago this June, a determined brigade of Marines fought ferociously over the hallowed grounds of Belleau Wood. Those Marines solidified our Corps' global reputation for being a tenacious and highly-skilled fighting force that forever etched the phrase "Teufel Hunden" into our lexicon. The same year Marines secured control of Belleau Wood, more than 300 women answered our Nation's call, becoming the first females to enlist in our Corps. The legacy of the first Women Marine Reservists, and all trailblazing Marines, serves as a reminder that the title Marine is not restricted by gender, color, or creed – it is a warrior spirit and distinguished role earned by an elite group.

This year also marks 50 years since Marines fought ferocious battles against a worthy foe in some of the most austere locations of Vietnam. The indomitable spirit and unyielding resourcefulness of Marines cutting through the mountainous triple canopy jungles and overcoming the challenges of urban combat during the "Tet Offensive" honed the warfighting prowess of our Corps. Hard lessons learned at Khe Sanh and Hue proved crucial to our successes during Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* – allowing us to secure victory in the fields of Sangin and on the urban battlefields of Fallujah. It was also at Hue that now retired Sergeant Major John Canley charged enemy machine gun positions and put his own life on the line to ensure no Marine was left behind, epitomizing the true meaning of *Semper Fidelis*. Today, we proudly honor his faithfulness with our Nation's highest award for valor.

For 243 years, Marines have fought and won whenever and wherever the Nation calls. In the harshest conditions, over the most brutal terrain, and against the most formidable enemies, Marines defend the ideals of freedom with grit and tenacity. Though battlefields change and capabilities evolve, history proves that true victory comes from the individual Marine with steeled resolve, the drive to overcome any obstacle, and the warrior spirit to fight on against all odds. It takes that steadfast faithfulness – *Semper Fidelis* – to Corps, country, and each other that abounds throughout our storied legacy.

Happy Birthday, Marines!

Robert B. Neller
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

Marine Corps Birthday Celebration

The U.S. Marine Corps begins preparation for its “birthday party” every summer. Activities become more feverish as the fall hues arrive. By early November, every Marine is either rehearsing his role in the “party” or pressing, polishing, and spit-shining in order to appear at his or her best for the Birthday Ball. This has not always been the case, however. In fact, Marines have not always celebrated their founding on November the 10th. Formal commemoration of the birthday of the Marine Corps began on 10 November 1921. That particular day was chosen because on that day the Second Continental Congress resolved in 1775 to raise two battalions of Continental Marines.

Until 1921 the birthday of the Corps had been celebrated on another date. An unidentified news paper clipping from 1918 refers to the celebration of the 120th birthday of the Marine Corps on 11 July “as usual with no fuss.” It is doubtful that there was any real celebration at all. Further inspection of documents and publications prior to 1921 shows no evidence of ceremonies, pageants, or parties. The July date was commemorated between 1798 and 1921 as the birthday of the Corps. During the Revolution, Marines had fought on land and sea, but at the close of the Revolution the Marine Corps and the Navy were all but disbanded. On 11 July 1798, President John Adams approved a bill that recreated the Corps, thereby providing the rationale for this day being commemorated as the birthday of the U.S. Marine Corps.

On 21 October 1921, Maj Edwin McClellan, Officer-in-Charge, Historical Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, sent a memorandum to Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune, suggesting that the original birthday on 10 November 1775 be declared a Marine Corps holiday to be celebrated throughout the Corps.

Maj McClellan further suggested that a dinner be held in Washington, D.C., to commemorate the event. Guests would include prominent men from

the Marine Corps, Army, and Navy, and descendants of the Revolution. Accordingly, on 1 November 1921, MajGen Lejeune issued Marine Corps Order No. 47, Series 1921. The order summarized the history, mission, and tradition of the Corps, and directed that it be read to every command on 10 November each subsequent year in honor of the birthday of the Marine Corps. This order has been duly carried out.

Some commands expanded the celebration during the next few years. In 1923 at Fort Mifflin, Pennsylvania, the celebration of the Marine Corps’ 148th birthday took the form of a dance in the barracks that evening. Marines at the Navy Yard, Norfolk, Virginia, staged a sham battle on the parade ground in commemoration of the birthday. The battle lasted about twenty minutes, and was witnessed by Portsmouth and Norfolk citizens. At Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the birthday was celebrated on the 12th, since a special liberty to Santiago had been arranged on the 10th. The morning activities included field and water sports, and a shooting match. In the afternoon the Marines won a baseball game, 9-8, over a Cuban team. In the evening, members of the command put on a variety show followed by four boxing bouts.

The first so-called “Birthday Ball,” such as suggested by Maj McClellan, was probably held in 1925 in Philadelphia. No records have been located of one prior to 1925. Guests included the secretaries of War and Navy, Major General Commandant Lejeune, famous statesmen, soldiers, and sailors. The principle event was the unveiling of a tablet on the site of Tun Tavern. The tablet was a gift from the Thomas Roberts Reath Post, American Legion, whose membership was composed exclusively of Marines. The celebration was held in conjunction with the annual convention of the Marine Corps League. A parade included Marines, Regular Army, and Navy detachments, National Guard, and other military organizations. The evening banquet was held at the Benjamin Franklin Hotel and a ball followed at the Bellevue-Stratford.

It is not possible to determine precisely when the first cake ceremony was held, but there is evidence of a ceremony being held at Quantico, Virginia, in 1935. Also on record was one held at Marine Barracks, Washington, D.C., in 1937 where Major General Commandant Thomas Holcomb presided at an open house for Marine Corps officers. Ceremonies included the cutting of a huge cake designed after the famous Tun Tavern in Philadelphia.

From 1937, observances of the Marine Corps Birthday appeared to develop spontaneously throughout the Corps as if they had a life of their own. The celebrations were publicized through every media. Newsreels, motion pictures, and displays were prepared to summarize the history of the Corps. In 1943, standard blank Marine Corps scrap books were forwarded to all districts to be filled with 168th anniversary clippings, scripts, pictures, programs, and other memorabilia, and returned to Headquarters. Unfortunately none of these scrapbooks remain in official files.

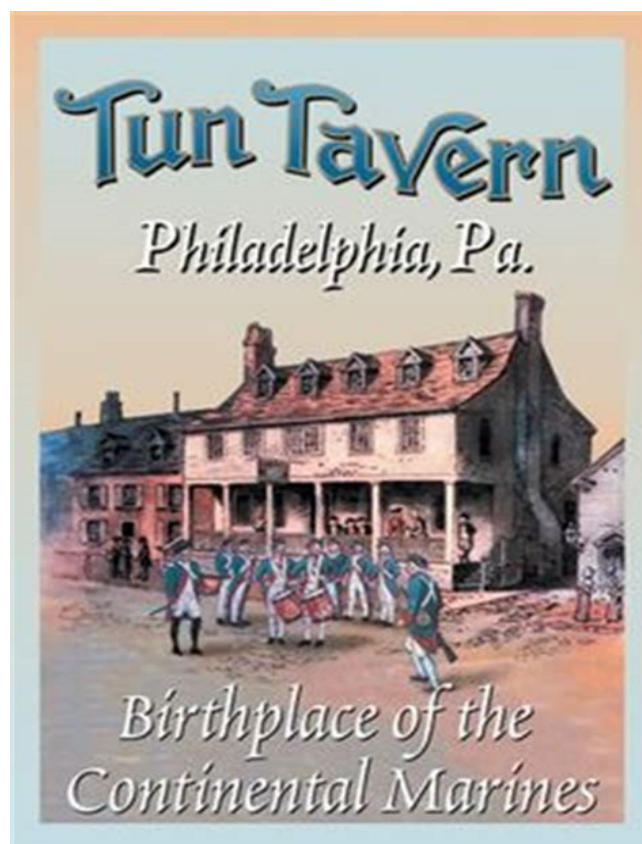
In 1951, a formal Birthday Ball Pageant was held at Headquarters Marine Corps. Similar to the pageant today, the script described the Marines' period uniforms and the cake ceremony. Although this is the first substantive record of a pageant, *Leatherneck* magazine of 10 November 1925 pictures Marines at a pageant in Salt Lake City, Utah, which had taken place "several years ago."

On 28 October 1952, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., directed that the celebration of the Marine Corps Birthday be formalized throughout the Corps, and provided an outline for the cake ceremony, as well as other formal observances. This outline was included in the Marine Corps Drill Manual, approved 26 January 1956.

Traditionally, the first piece of Birthday Cake is presented to the oldest Marine present and the second piece to the youngest Marine present. When and where this tradition began remains

unknown. Some records indicate this practice, and others vary it depending on the dignitaries present at the ball. First pieces of cake have been presented to newlyweds, the Secretary of the Navy, governors, and others, but generally speaking, the first pieces of cake go to the oldest and youngest Marines at the Ball. At present, celebrations of the Marine Corps Birthday on 10 November differ at posts and stations throughout the Corps. All commemorations include the reading of the Marine Corps Order No. 47, and the Commandant's message to those assembled. Most commands sponsor a Birthday Ball of some sort, complete with pageant and cake ceremony as prescribed in the Marine Corps Manual. Like the Corps itself, the Birthday Ball developed from simple origins to become the polished, professional function that all Marines commemorate on 10 November around the world.

Source: Marine Corps Historical Branch



THE GREAT WAR REMEMBERED



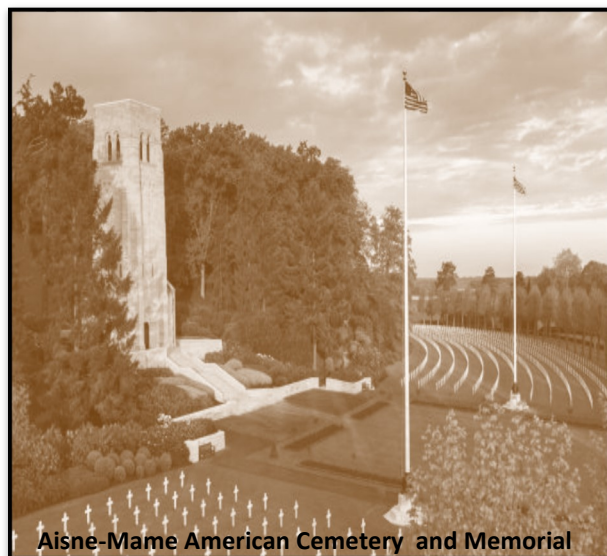
Marines in France

On April 6, 1917 the United States entered World War I by declaring war on Germany. The Marine Corps grew quickly and by war's end, the Corps was 75,000 strong -- more than seven times its pre-war size.

Marines showed for the first time we could operate in large combat units, and while fighting land battles alongside the Army, we strengthened our hard-won reputation for bravery.

Marines also experienced unprecedented casualties during World War I. In a single day of fighting at Belleau Wood on June 6, 1918, more Marines were killed than during the entire previous history of the Corps.

Some of the war's bloodiest clashes occurred at Blanc Mont, France, in October 1918. Marine casualties during the 10-day battle reached over 2,300. Source: USMC Museum



Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial

With headstones lying in a sweeping curve, the 42.5-acre Aisne-Marne American Cemetery and Memorial in France, sits at the foot of Belleau Wood. The cemetery contains the graves of 2,289 service members, most of whom fought in the vicinity and in the Marne Valley in the summer of 1918.

Belleau Wood adjoins the cemetery and contains many vestiges of World War I. A monument at the flagpole commemorates the valor of the U.S. Marines who captured much of this ground in 1918.

Source: American Battle Monuments Commission



American Marine sharpshooters after the Battle of Seichfrey, France.

National World War I Museum and Memorial

9647-S A DAYS "BAG" AFTER HUNTING THE HUN.

Gold Star Mothers and Widows Pilgrimages: 1930 to 1933



A pilgrim of Party "L" at Suresnes American Cemetery, Suresnes, France-July 26, 1930. Courtesy National Archives

In the aftermath of World War I, wives became widows, and mothers outlived their sons. More than 100,000 Americans died during the Great War, creating suffering and pain for those family members they left behind.

As the war raged, the Gold Star became a symbol for mourning the fallen. Families who lost a loved one in the service to their country hung a Gold Star in their windows. Their female relatives referred to themselves as Gold Star mothers and widows, and they created several national organizations for collective mourning and support. These groups lobbied Congress for an official government-funded pilgrimage to visit their loved ones' graves, which the government authorized on March 2, 1929. Through the Gold Star pilgrimages of 1930 to 1933, the U.S. government took the grieving mothers and widows to visit their sons' and husbands' graves in American cemeteries in England, Belgium and France.

All mothers and un-remarried widows of someone buried or memorialized at an American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) cemetery received an invitation to visit their loved one's grave site. Over the course of the program 6,654 women participated.

Even after the crash of the stock market in October 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression, the federal government continued to fund the Gold Star pilgrimage. The Quartermaster Corps meticulously organized the program and cared for the mothers and widows. They arranged every detail of the journey and monitored the pilgrims' physical and emotional health. In addition to visiting the cemetery or battlefield and memorials, the pilgrims traveled to many of the major tourist sites in the countries they visited, including the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, where

a wreath was laid at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Cemetery staff decorated the graves of the fallen with the flags of the U.S. and the host country. They provided a chair for the women to sit next to their loved ones' headstone and reflect. Each woman received a photograph of herself at the tombstone, where she also laid a memorial wreath. These personal touches added to the dignity of the pilgrimages and demonstrated the government's commitment to the Gold Star families.

The Gold Star pilgrimages honored these women's sacrifices and eased their grief. After her 1930 pilgrimage to the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, Mrs. O.B. Johnson of Iowa shared "*the Government is certainly doing the right and square thing by the Gold Star Mothers. We were treated with respect and deference...on the whole a wonderful trip.*" Many pilgrims expressed their admiration for the ABMC cemeteries. Mrs. Ettie M. Brown and Mrs. George Ingersoll visited the Saint-Mihiel American Cemetery and declared that "*the cemetery is kept beautifully and we feel our sons have a lovely resting place.*"

Through the Gold Star pilgrimages, women played a key role in the early commemorations at the ABMC cemeteries. The government recognized that these women served the nation through their losses and acknowledged the importance of providing them with the opportunity to visit the overseas graves of their fallen family members. The ABMC mission during the Gold Star pilgrimages was the same as it is today; to maintain military cemeteries with honor, so that the loved ones of the fallen can find solace in the dignified care of their eternal resting place.



1918-2018

BELLS OF PEACE

Bells of Peace Will Ring Again

WWI COMMISSION ANNOUNCES

'BELLS OF PEACE' ON ARMISTICE CENTENNIAL

Nationwide Bell-Tolling on November 11, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. will honor the 116,516 American men & women who died in WWI.

The World War One Centennial Commission, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library, the Society of the Honor Guard of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, announces BELLS OF PEACE: A WORLD WAR ONE REMEMBRANCE.

BELLS OF PEACE is a collaborative program, whereby American citizens and organizations across the entire country, are invited to toll bells in their communities twenty-one times on Sunday, November 11, 2018 at 11:00 a.m. local time. This nationwide program is designed to honor those American men and women who served 100 years ago, during World War I.

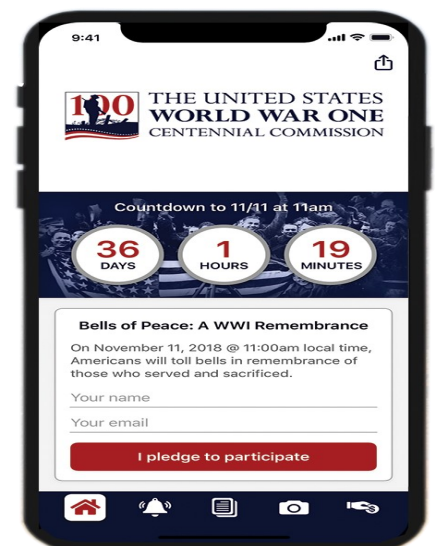
Conceived and designed in collaboration with the Guards of Honor at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the bell tolling provides a solemn reminder of the sacrifice and service of veterans of World War I, and all veterans combined.

Bells will be tolled in communities across the nation, in places of worship, schools, town halls, public carillons, and cemeteries to mark the centennial of the Armistice that brought an end to hostilities, in what Americans fervently hoped had been "*The War to End All Wars.*" The armistice agreement between the warring countries was signed at 11 a.m. on November 11th, 1918.

World War I took place between July 1914 and November 1918, and was one of the deadliest conflicts in world history. Over nine million combatants and seven million civilians died as a result of the war. The United States officially entered the war on April 6, 1917. Some 4.7 million Americans stepped forward to serve in uniform during the war, two million of them were deployed overseas to fight, and 116,516 of them never made it home.

Visit www.wwlcc.org/memorial for more information on commemoration events and how you can participate.

Download the Bell of Peace Participation App <https://www.worldwar1centennial.org/commemorate/event-map-system/ace-smartphone-app.html> and "Toll the Bell" from any location.



IMPORTANT REMINDER: TRICARE Retiree Dental Plan is Ending

On **December 31, 2018**, the Defense Health Agency's TRICARE Retiree Dental Program (TRDP) will end.

As directed in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017, retired uniformed service members and their families, who were eligible for TRDP, will have the opportunity to enroll in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP).

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM), in partnership with the Defense Health Agency (DHA) and the Department of Defense (DoD) announced the FEDVIP will be offered for the first time to TRICARE eligible retirees and their families during the 2018 Federal Benefits Open Season (November 12, 2018 through December 10, 2018).)



Most retirees and their family members are eligible to enroll in FEDVIP Dental and/or Vision plans. Members of the Retired Reserve, non-active Medal of Honor recipients, and Survivors are also eligible to enroll in FEDVIP. This is the first time ever retired uniformed service members and their families who were eligible for TRDP have the option to enroll in vision benefits from one of four carriers. You must be enrolled in a TRICARE Health Plan to enroll in FEDVIP Vision. FEDVIP offers a choice between 10 dental carriers and 4 vision carriers. Review available plans and costs at: www.tricare.benefeds.com

When do you enroll?

You must enroll during the Federal Benefits Open Season (November 12, 2018 through December 10, 2018) if you wish to have dental coverage in 2019. All eligible family members must enroll in the same plan.

When TRDP ends on December 31, 2018, there will be no automatic enrollment into a FEDVIP plan. The Federal Benefits Open Season is your annual opportunity to enroll in, change, or cancel a FEDVIP dental or vision plan.

If you enroll during the Federal Benefits Open Season, your effective date of coverage for a FEDVIP dental and/or vision plan is January 1, 2019.



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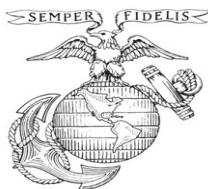
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