

SEMPER FIDELIS

NEWSLETTER FOR RETIRED MARINES



10 November 2019

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

This year, the Marine Corps celebrates 244 years of warfighting excellence and uncommon valor. United States Marines define the world's image of elite warrior-citizens. We take great pride in the legacy built by those who came before us and in carrying that legacy into the future. Capabilities, battlefields, and adversaries change, and Marines continue to adapt to every challenge – prepared to fight and win wherever and whenever our Nation calls. What does not change is the Marine spirit – a warrior spirit rooted in our core values.

The strength of our Corps is our Marines. Our success depends on all Marines embodying the values in which our Corps was founded; it requires leveraging the talents and ingenuity of every Marine to strengthen our Corps. Since 1775, courageous Marines have answered the call to fight for freedom and shaped our reputation as the most feared fighting force the world has seen. Marines from each generation approached every battle with a lethal combination of versatility, perseverance, and adaptability that has allowed us to prevail in any clime and place.

Throughout the 244-year history of the Marine Corps, our Nation has required Marines to adapt capabilities and fighting styles to defeat adversaries in all domains. The Marines who took to the seas with naval counterparts to combat the Barbary Pirates solidified our role as a naval expeditionary force-in-readiness. World War I saw Marines fighting sustained land campaigns and returning from those battles to immediately begin redesigning how to go to war. Those innovations laid the foundation for the amphibious landings of World War II. Combat operations in Korea and Vietnam brought harsh climates and unforgiving terrains that again forced Marines to adapt and overcome. In Iraq and Afghanistan, urban battlefields and counterinsurgency tactics demanded innovations in warfighting strategies and capabilities. Today, we find ourselves once again facing new and evolving threats in different operational environments. Like our predecessors, we will move forward with the lessons learned from past conflicts while redesigning the force and innovating for future conflict with any adversary who dares to fight.

Marines, congratulations on 244 years of excellence. Like the first birthday message published by 13th Commandant General John Lejeune in 1921, this message serves as a reminder of the legacy we are charged with upholding. Today is our day to celebrate our heritage and to honor the sacrifices of those who fought before us. It is also a day to recommit ourselves to our core values and resolutely pursue the strength of character that defines United States Marines. And it is a day to look toward future battlefields, to prepare to uphold the distinguished warfighting legacy of our predecessors wherever our Nation calls.

Happy Birthday, Marines!

David H. Berger
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 newspaper 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

"USMC Victory, 1944"



The caption reads: "The barber even remembered to dot the 'I' when he cut and shaved this sign on Marines aboard ship, bound for the invasion of the Marshall Islands."

Photo is from the Alexander Vandegrift Collection (COLL/3166) at the Marine Corps Archives and Special Collections.

Marine Corps Birthday Message

Marine Corps Order No. 47 (Series 1921)

Headquarters

U.S. Marine Corps Washington

Date: 1 November 1921

The following will be read to the command on the 10th of November, 1921, and hereafter on the 10th of November of every year. Should the order not be received by the 10th of November, 1921, it will be read upon receipt.

On November 10, 1775, a Corps of Marines was created by a resolution of Continental Congress. Since that date many thousand men have borne the name "Marine". In memory of them it is fitting that we who are Marines should commemorate the birthday of our Corps by calling to mind the glories of its long and illustrious history.

The record of our Corps is one which will bear comparison with that of the most famous military organizations in the world's history. During 90 of the 146 years of its existence the Marine Corps has been in action against the Nation's foes. From the Battle of Trenton to the Argonne, Marines have won foremost honors in war, and in the long eras of tranquility at home, generation after generation of Marines have grown gray in war in both hemispheres and in every corner of the seven seas, that our country and its citizens might enjoy peace and security.

In every battle and skirmish since the birth of our Corps, Marines have acquitted themselves with the greatest distinction, winning new honors on each occasion until the term "Marine" has come to signify all that is highest in military efficiency and soldierly virtue.

This high name of distinction and soldierly repute we who are Marines today have received from those who preceded us in the Corps. With it we have also received from them the eternal spirit which has animated our Corps from generation to generation and has been the distinguishing mark of the Marines in every age. So long as that spirit continues to flourish Marines will be found equal to every emergency in the future as they have been in the past, and the men of our Nation will regard us as worthy successors to the long line of illustrious men who have served as "Soldiers of the Sea" since the founding of the Corps.

John A. Lejeune,
Major General Commandant



Major General Commandant John A. Lejeune



MARINES' HYMN...The Oldest Service Song Of The United States...Sing it Loud...Sing It Proud...You Earned The Title...United States Marine.

Article Courtesy of the Reference Branch USMC History

Following the war with the Barbary Pirates in 1805, when Lieutenant Presely N. O'Bannon and his small force of Marines participated in the capture of Derne and hoisted the American flag for the first time over a fortress of the Old World, the Colors of the Corps was inscribed with the words: "To the Shores of Tripoli." After the Marines participated in the capture and occupation of Mexico City and the Castle of Chapultepec, otherwise known as the "Halls of Montezuma," the words on the Colors were changed to read: "From the Shores of Tripoli to the Halls of Montezuma." Following the close of the Mexican War came the first verse of the Marines' Hymn, written, according to tradition, by a Marine on duty in Mexico. For the sake of euphony, the unknown author transposed the phrases in the motto on the Colors so that the first two lines of the Hymn would read: "From the Halls of Montezuma, to the Shores of Tripoli."

A serious attempt to trace the tune of the Marines' Hymn to its source is revealed in correspondence between Colonel A.S. McLemore, USMC, and Walter F. Smith, second leader of the Marine Band. Colonel McLemore wrote: "Major Richard Wallach, USMC, says that in 1878, when he was in Paris, France, the aria to which the Marines' Hymn is now sung was a very popular one." The name of the opera and a part of the chorus was secured from Major Wallach and forwarded to Mr. Smith, who replied: "Major Wallach is to be congratulated upon a wonderfully accurate musical memory, for the aria of the Marine Hymn is certainly to be found in the opera, 'Genevieve de Brabant'. . . The melody is not in the exact form of the Marine Hymn, but is undoubtedly the aria from which it was taken. I am informed, however, by one of the members of the band, who has a Spanish wife, that the aria was one familiar to her childhood and it may, therefore, be a Spanish folk song."

In a letter to Major Harold F. Wirgman, USMC, John Philip Sousa says: "The melody of the 'Halls of Montezuma' is taken from Offenbach's comic opera, 'Genevieve de Brabant' and is sung by two gendarmes." Most people believe that the aria of the Marines' Hymn was, in fact, taken from "Genevieve de Brabant," an opera-bouffe (a farcical form of opera, generally termed musical comedy) composed by Jacques Offenbach, and presented at the Theatre de Bouffes Parisians, Paris, on 19 November 1859.

Offenbach was born in Cologne, Germany, 21 June 1819 and died 5 October 1880. He studied music from an early age and in 1838 entered the Paris Conservatoire as a student. In 1834, he was admitted as a violoncellist to the "Opera Comique" and soon attained much popularity with Parisian audiences. He became conductor of the Theatre Francais in 1847 and subsequently leased the Theatre Comte, which he reopened as the Bouffes-Parisians. Most of his operas are classified as comic (light and fanciful) and include numerous popular productions, many of which still hold a high place in European and American countries.

Every campaign the Marines have taken part in gives birth to an unofficial verse. For example, the following from Iceland:

*"Again in nineteen forty-one
We sailed a north'ard course
And found beneath the midnight sun,
The Viking and the Norse.
The Iceland girls were slim and fair,
And fair the Iceland scenes,
And the Army found in landing there,
The United States Marines."*

Continued on page 6

Marines' Hymn continued from page 5

Copyright ownership of the Marines' Hymn was vested in the United States Marine Corps per certificate of registration dated 19 August 1891, but it is now in the public domain. In 1929, the Commandant of the Marine Corps authorized the following verses of the Marines' Hymn as the official version:

THE MARINES' HYMN

*From the Halls of Montezuma
to the Shores of Tripoli,
We fight our country's battles
On the land as on the sea.
First to fight for right and freedom,
And to keep our honor clean,
We are proud to claim the title
of United States Marine.*

*Our flag's unfurl'd to every breeze
From dawn to setting sun;
We have fought in every clime and place
Where we could take a gun.
In the snow of far-off northern lands
And in sunny tropic scenes,
You will find us always on the job
The United States Marines.*

*Here's health to you and to our Corps
Which we are proud to serve;
In many a strife we've fought for life
And never lost our nerve.
If the Army and the Navy
Ever look on Heaven's scenes,
They will find the streets are guarded
By United States Marines.*

"On 21 November 1942, the Commandant of the Marine Corps approved a change in the words of the fourth line, first verse, to read, "In the air, on land, and sea." Ex-Gunnery Sergeant H.L. Tallman, veteran observer in Marine Corps Aviation who participated in many combat missions with Marine Corps Aviation over the Western Front in World War I, first proposed the change at a meeting of the First Marine Aviation Force Veterans Association in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Many interesting stories have been associated with the Marines' Hymn. One of the best was published in the Stars and Stripes, the official newspaper of the American Expeditionary Force, under date of 16 August 1918.

"A wounded officer from among the gallant French lancers had just been carried into a Yankee field hospital to have his dressing changed. He was full of compliments and curiosity about the dashing contingent that fought at his regiment's left.

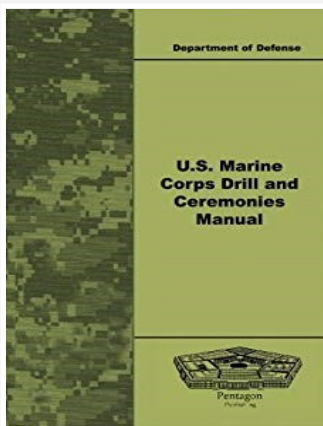
Continued on page 7

Marines' Hymn continued from page 6

A lot of them are mounted troops by this time, he explained, for when our men would be shot from their horses, these youngsters would give one running jump and gallop ahead as cavalry. I believe they are soldiers from Montezuma. At least, when they advanced this morning, they were all singing "From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli."

The Marines' Hymn has been sung and played wherever U.S. Marines have landed, and today is recognized as one of the foremost military service songs.

MARINES DIRECTED TO FACE THE MUSIC AND SING!



The Marine Corps Drill and Ceremonies Manual (MCO 5060.20) is designed to provide uniformity and standardization for all Marine Corps organizations.

First published as NAVMC 2691, it was canceled and incorporated into MCO 5060.20 in 2003. In May 2019, the manual was again revised and published to incorporate minor changes to existing procedures, rearranged material more logically, and updated photos of uniforms.

Chapter 3, paragraph 1.(c), now directs Marines to face the music and sing the words to the iconic hymn.

"It is a long standing tradition for Marines, past and present, who when they hear the Marines' Hymn that they will face the direction of the music and stand at attention. It is now directed that Marines, present and who have served honorably, who are not in a formation or part of an actual ceremony, or marching in a parade or review, who when they hear the playing of the Marines' Hymn will stand at attention, face the music and sing the words to the Hymn."



It's not a name. It's a title. United States Marine!

HAPPY 244TH BIRTHDAY MARINES

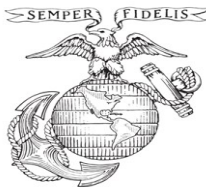
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