



10 November 2022

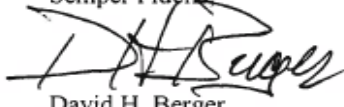
A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

70 years ago, Army Major General Frank E. Lowe was quoted as saying, "The safest place in Korea was right behind a platoon of Marines. Lord, how they could fight." That testimonial rings as true now as it did then, and will remain so tomorrow. As we celebrate the 247th anniversary of our Corps' founding, we reflect on nearly two and a half centuries of exceptional prowess, while also taking objective stock of where we are today and how we will prepare for future battlefields. Our birthday provides us a chance to focus on the one thing common to our success in the past, present, and future: the individual Marine. Victories are not won because of technology or equipment, but because of our Marines.

Since 1775, Marines have fought courageously and tenaciously in every conflict our country has faced. Through the Revolution, the Spanish-American War, World Wars in Europe and the Pacific, conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, and operations in the Middle East, Marines consistently earned a reputation as the world's elite fighting force. We inherit and take pride in this reputation, evolved over time by Marines acquitting themselves with honor and distinction on every battlefield in every clime and place. Battlefields change, and Marines have always adapted to the environment and the changing character of war — but the reason we fight and win is immutable. It's the individual warfighters, and their love for each other, that makes our Corps as formidable a force today as it has been for the past 247 years. It's our ethos and our unapologetic resolve to be the most capable and lethal fighting force that sets us apart from the rest.

Current events around the world remind us that peace is not guaranteed. While we are justifiably proud of our past and pay tribute to the remarkable warfighters who came before us, we understand that the stories of yesterday cannot secure our freedom tomorrow. We must be ready to respond when our Nation calls. It falls on Marines who are in uniform today to write the next chapter of our Corps. The solemn responsibility of maintaining our illustrious warfighting legacy rests upon your shoulders. I know that you are up to that task. The battlefields of tomorrow are uncertain. The future characteristics of warfare are uncertain. But one thing is certain — wherever Marines are called, they will fight and win — today, tomorrow, and into the future.

Happy 247th Birthday, Marines!

Semper Fidelis  
  
 David H. Berger  
 General, U.S. Marine Corps  
 Commandant of the Marine Corps

## SEMPER FIDELIS

## SEMPER FIDELIS NEWSLETTER FOR RETIRED MARINES ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

The Semper Fidelis newsletter is published with appropriated funds on a quarterly basis.

Access it online:

<https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Agencies/Manpower-Reserve-Affairs-MMSR-6/>

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Some of the information compiled for Semper Fidelis comes from other sources to include experts in their respective fields, i.e. , DFAS, VA, and TRICARE. Content was current at the time this publication went to press. Any delays in mailing may be due to unforeseen circumstances and we apologize for the inconvenience.

**NOTE: The newsletter is posted online before it is mailed.**

Semper Fidelis accepts unsolicited material for publication for regular columns such as Second Career and Reunions, but reserves the right to reject any unsolicited material deemed inappropriate or illegible for publication.

Semper Fidelis is published quarterly by MMSR-6 to inform retired Marines and their family members on information of interest on their rights, benefits, and privileges. Items in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Marine Corps or the Department of Defense.

### 2022 TRICARE Open Season November 14 - December 12

TRICARE Open Season is the annual period when you can enroll in or change your health care coverage for the next year. In 2022, TRICARE Open Season begins November 14 and ends December 12. Any enrollment changes you make will go into effect on January 1, 2023. Open season applies to anyone enrolled in, or eligible for a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select.

**If you're eligible to participate in TRICARE Open Season, you have three options:**

- **Stay in your plan.** If you want to stay in your current TRICARE health plan, you don't have to re-enroll. You'll continue in your current health plan through 2023 or as long as you're eligible.
- **Enroll in a plan.** If you're eligible for a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select but not enrolled, you can enroll in a plan now.
- **Change plans.** If you're already enrolled in a TRICARE Prime option or TRICARE Select, you can switch plans and switch between individual and family enrollment.

**What Happens if I Don't Take Any Action?**

If you aren't already in a plan and don't enroll in a plan during open season, you'll only be eligible for care at a military hospital or clinic if space is available.

**Making Enrollment Changes Outside of Open Season**

Outside of TRICARE Open Season, you can enroll in or change enrollment to TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select following a Qualifying Life Event (QLE).

A QLE is a certain change in your life, such as marriage, birth of a child, or retirement from active duty, which may mean different TRICARE health plans are available to you and your family members. A TRICARE QLE opens a 90-day period for you to make eligible enrollment changes. A QLE for one family member creates a chance for all eligible family members to make enrollment changes. To learn more, visit [www.tricare.mil/lifeevents](http://www.tricare.mil/lifeevents).

Outside of the Federal Benefits Open Season, you can only enroll in the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) or make changes to your existing FEDVIP plan if you experience a FEDVIP QLE. Remember, FEDVIP QLEs may be different from the TRICARE QLEs. To learn more, visit [BENEFEDS.com](http://BENEFEDS.com).

TRICARE East 1-800-444-5445, TRICARE West 1-844-866-9378, TRICARE Overseas International SOS (Overseas Contractor) Contact TRICARE Overseas Program ([tricare-overseas.com](http://tricare-overseas.com))

## History of the Marine Corps Birthday Celebration

The U.S. Marine Corps begins preparations 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 date 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, Madigan 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

Continued from page 3

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, [Gen Lempel 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 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.



## Marine Corps Birthday Celebration Guadalcanal, circa 1942

LtCol W. W. Stickney, the commanding officer, cuts a Thanksgiving cake with a Japanese officer's sword at Guadalcanal, as hungry Leathernecks look on."  
(Official USMC Photograph)



# 1921 Marine Corps Birthday Message

*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.*

## Marine Corps Order No. 47 (Series 1921)

### Headquarters

### U.S. Marine Corps Washington

Date: 1 November 1921

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



# Celebrating the Birth of our Corps...in Every Clime and Place

## Happy Birthday Marines!

### Cake Cutting Script

The Marine Corps birthday cake-cutting ceremony is important to all Marines, as it is an annual renewal of each Marine's commitment to the Corps . . . and the Corps' commitment to our nation's quest for peace and freedom worldwide.

The birthday cake is traditionally cut with the Mameluke sword, as a reminder that we are a band of warriors, committed to carrying the sword, so that our nation may live in peace. The Mameluke sword gets its name from the cross hilt and ivory grip design, similar to swords used for centuries by Ottoman warriors. The

Marine Corps tradition of carrying this sword dates from Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon's assault of Derma, Tripoli, in 1805, where he is said to have won the sword of the governor of the city.

As is our custom, the first piece of cake will be presented to our guest of honor.

By tradition, the second piece of cake is presented to the oldest Marine present.

The third piece of cake is presented to the youngest Marine present.

(Official USMC Photograph, Korea, 1951)



Official USMC Photograph, Korea, 1951)



(Sgt. Freddy. G. Cantu , Afghanistan, 2008)



(Official USMC Photograph, Iraq, 2008)



(Official USMC Photograph, Vietnam, 1969)



## Toys for TOTs Across America



**UNITED STATES** -Every year, thousands of Marines, their families and local communities work together to spread holiday cheer to children in need through the Marine Corps Reserve's Toys for Tots Program. The organization was founded in 1947 when Marine Corps Reserve Major (Maj) Bill Hendricks was asked by his wife to deliver handcrafted dolls that she made to an agency that helped children in need. When they could not find any organization, they decided to create one. Within the first year they donated 5,000 toys to children in need all over Los Angeles, Calif., where Maj Hendricks' Marine Corps Reserve unit was located.

The next year in 1948, the 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Clifton B. Gates, directed all Marine Reserve sites to implement a Toys for Tots campaign, transforming the local initiative into a national communication action program. At the time, Maj Hendricks worked as the Director of Public Relations at Warner Brothers where he became friends with Walt Disney. Mr. Disney designed the first Toys for Tots poster that included a miniature three-car train that was adopted as the Toys for Tots logo. Every year since then, posters have become a recognized part of the program.

For over 70 years, every Marine Corps Reserve unit in the Marine Corps leads an annual Toys for Tots donation drive for their local communities, although any person or company can host a donation drive. Since its creation, the foundation has distributed 604 million toys to 272 million children in need. Of those contributions, the Marine Corps and its surrounding communities have distributed 572,259 toys and supported 352,858 children. Some of the installation campaigns across the regions are Marine Corps Base (MCB) Camp Blaze, Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, MCB Hawaii and MCB Quantico.

The Toys for Tots Program has had a lasting legacy on the nation and has garnered support from numerous professional sports teams, businesses and celebrities, including First Lady Nancy Reagan, who was the national Toys for Tots spokesperson in 1983.

Today, Toys for Tots is governed by a board of directors, all of whom are veteran Marines and business owners throughout the country. The foundation was founded in 1991 as a not-for-profit and is headquartered outside of MCB Quantico main gate in Triangle, VA. To learn more about your local Toys for Tots Program, visit <https://www.toysfortots.org>.

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