

# SEMPER FIDELIS

## NEWSLETTER FOR RETIRED MARINES



10 November 2024

### A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS

For 249 years, Marines have served as our Nation's sentinels of freedom. As we celebrate our Corps' birthday this year, I encourage all Marines to reflect on our legacy forged in blood on battlefields since 1775, and to rededicate ourselves to carrying that legacy untarnished into the future. Collectively, we who wear the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor have an obligation to uphold the ideals of self-discipline, warfighting proficiency, professionalism, and personal conduct that define what it means to be a Marine. I know you are all up to the task.

Twenty years ago this month, Marines fought and won the Second Battle of Fallujah, a brutal, grinding house to house fight, whose victory ultimately paved the way for the stabilization of the Republic of Iraq. Often in Iraq there were no true front lines, and by necessity, Fallujah was a battle in which every Marine fought, demonstrating once again our cornerstone philosophy that Every Marine is a Rifleman.

Our history bears witness to Marines of all stripes picking up their rifles and fighting for Corps and Country when the call came. From Wake Island to the Chosin Reservoir to Khe Sanh to Camp Bastion, every Marine fought. Our future battles will be no different. Our rear areas will be as vulnerable as our front lines and every Marine from our infantry battalions to our aviation squadrons to our headquarters and support elements will have to stand-to when called.

Preparing for the threats of the future requires the same exceptional standards and ironclad discipline that are the hallmarks of our Corps. Twenty years ago in Fallujah, our predecessors staunchly adhered to these virtues, earned our Nation's trust, and ensured the U.S. Marine Corps would remain the most feared fighting force in the world. It is our sworn duty to uphold those standards and stay true to our Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment. Though technology and equipment change, the Marine Corps' culture of excellence must not. The road ahead is far from certain, but our ethos will never change - Every Marine a Rifleman and Everyone Fights.

As I've said before, it is the honor of my lifetime to be a Marine and serve as your Commandant. I'm proud to stand alongside each of you, and I'm excited to see what the future holds for our Corps. When I travel to visit Marines here at home and deployed around the globe, I find absolute confidence that this generation of Marines has what it takes to uphold our Corps' legacy and prevail in any conflict we face. Happy Birthday, Marines!

Semper Fidelis,

Eric M. Smith  
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/>

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 3) History of the Marine Corps Birthday
- 5) John A. Lejeune Birthday message
- 6) Celebrations of the 248th Marine Corps Birthday

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.

### 2025 TRICARE Open Season November 11 - December 10

TRICARE Open Season is the annual period when you can enroll in your 2024 your health care coverage for the next year. For 2025, TRICARE Open Season begins November 11 and ends December 10. Any enrollment changes you make will go into effect on January 1, 2025. 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 2025 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).

## 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 Marine Corps' birthday 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 was 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 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 commemorating this day 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, Major General 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

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."

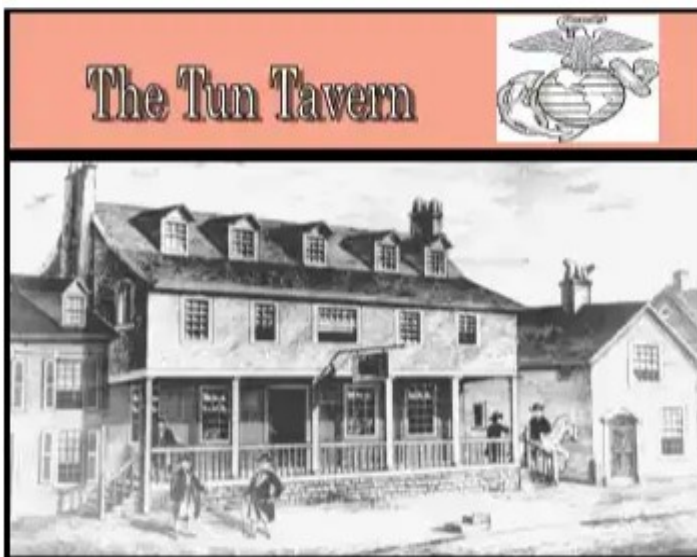
On 28 October 1952, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., directed that the celebration of the Marine Corps Birthday be formalized throughout the Corps, and provided an outline for the cake ceremony, as well as other formal observances. This outline was included in the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



### 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



# Celebrations of our 248th Birthday



## Iron Horse 248th Marine Corps Birthday Ball Celebration

4th Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion (4th LAR) Color Guard marches during the conduct of the 248th Birthday Ball aboard the USS Midway, San Diego, CA November 4, 2023

Photo by Ryon Ansaldo

## Marines and civilians celebrate H&S Battalion 248th Birthday, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton,

U.S. Marines with Headquarters and Support Battalion, Marine Corps Installations West, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton participate in the Marine Corps' 248th birthday pageant and cake cutting ceremony at the 11 Area parade deck on MCB Camp Pendleton, California, Nov. 9, 2023. The event is held annually to celebrate the Marine Corps' history and birthday. It showcases Marine Corps and Navy uniforms from past and present eras and consists of a traditional cake cutting ceremony.

Photo by Cpl Nataly Espitia



## MCBH Celebrate 248th Marine Corps Birthday

U. S. Marines with Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps Base Hawaii, display colors during the 248th Birth Ball ceremony at Honolulu, HI November 2, 2023.

Photo by Sgt Israel Chincio







### MCBH Celebrate 248th Marine Corps Birthday

U. S. Marine Corps Lieutenant General David G. Bellon, commander of Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces South, right, and Commander Alexandre Villarmosa, Brazilian Liaison Officer to Marine Forces South, pose for photo before the ceremony of the 248th Birthday Ball at Caesars Superdome, New Orleans, LA 10 November, 2023.

Photo by Cpl Jonathan L. Gonzalez

### New Orleans based Marines celebrate Marine Corps' 248th birthday

U.S. Marines assigned to Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces South, run through the French Quarter during the annual motivational run celebrating the 248th United States Marine Corps Birthday, New Orleans, Nov. 9th, 2023. The run started at Crescent Park and traveled along the Mississippi river, through the streets of downtown New Orleans, ending at the National World War II Museum for a cake cutting ceremony. Over 300 Marines and Sailors assigned to the command partook in this year's event.

Photo by LCpl Orion St. Pierre



### The Fallen Comrade Table

The fallen comrade table is displayed for attendees during the Marine Corps birthday on Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan. A ceremonial ball is held every year to celebrate the Marine Corps birthday. During the ball, Marines across the globe reflect on their legacy and honor the fallen.

Photo by LCpl Thomas Sheng



HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS (MMSR-6)  
JAMES WESLEY MARSH CENTER  
3280 RUSSELL ROAD  
QUANTICO, VA 22134-5103

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300

Access your newsletter online at <https://www.hqmc.marines.mil/Agencies/Manpower-Reserve-Affairs-MMSR-6/>

## Separation and Retirement Branch (MMSR)

VACANT, Branch Head

Maj Cody E. Pennington, *Assistant Branch Head*  
[cody.pennington@usmc.mil](mailto:cody.pennington@usmc.mil)



### Retired Services and Pay Section (MMSR-6)

Vincent P. Tate, *Human Resources Manager*  
[vincent.tate@usmc.mil](mailto:vincent.tate@usmc.mil)

Donald J. Saucier, *Writer-Editor*  
[donald.saucier@usmc.mil](mailto:donald.saucier@usmc.mil)

#### *Human Resources Specialists*

Beverly T. Britt  
Rose M. Thomas  
Glenda Williams  
Donald Saucier

*Marine Admin Staff*  
GySgt Renato J. Rodriguez-Gonzalez

### WHO TO CONTACT:



**MMSR-2:** (703) 784-9322/23 Enlisted  
(703) 784-9324/25 Officer  
*Active Duty Separations and Retirements*

- **Officer**  
[smb.manpower.mmsr2o@usmc.mil](mailto:smb.manpower.mmsr2o@usmc.mil)
- **Enlisted**  
[smb.manpower.mmsr2e@usmc.mil](mailto:smb.manpower.mmsr2e@usmc.mil)

**MMSR-4:** (703) 784-9308/09/21  
*Disability Separations and Retirements*  
[smb.manpower.mmsr4@usmc.mil](mailto:smb.manpower.mmsr4@usmc.mil)

**MMSR-5:** (703) 784-9306/07  
Fax: (703) 784-9834  
*Inactive Reserve Separations and Retirements*  
[smb.manpower.mmsr5@usmc.mil](mailto:smb.manpower.mmsr5@usmc.mil)

**MMSR-6:** (703) 784-9311/10; 1-800-336-4649  
Fax: (703) 784-9834  
*Retired Services and Pay*

- Address Changes (Note: Annuitants must call DFAS)
- Identification Cards
- Semper Fidelis
- Survivor Benefit Plan

[smb.manpower.mmsr6@usmc.mil](mailto:smb.manpower.mmsr6@usmc.mil)

